

**SIGNIFICATION**  
**In Buddhist and French Traditions**

### Harman Series in Semiotics – III

The essays on Signification in Buddhist and French traditions included here present the revised version of the lectures delivered at the Collège de France in December 1998. The Buddhist theory of *apoha vāda* is represented by the sixth and the seventh centuries philosophers, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti with their celebrated commentator in the eighth century CE, Śāntirakṣita. The French *Conceptualism* begins with Pierre Abélard in the beginning of the twelfth century and is followed by Condillac in the eighteenth and Merleau-Ponty in modern times.

It is shown that each philosopher is dialectically engaged with his own tradition, comes to terms with the prevalent ideologies of his times, and then proposes his own theory. What is important, however, is the fact that as the general dialectical engagement was similar, as the basic concern in both cases was the dominance of a certain Realism, the philosophers of these two traditions were able to steer clear of the extreme positions adopted by the Realist and the Nominalist thinkers...A rendering into English of Abélard's *Tractatus de Intellectibus* has been added to this series of essays.

*Cover* : The sacred and the profane, a painting by Sandrine Gill.



# **SIGNIFICATION**

## **In Buddhist and French Traditions**

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For Danielle  
and our grandchildren  
Jaspal and Nilam



For  
Héloïse and Abélard  
who dared to enlighten  
the Dark Middle Ages



. . . and for all those  
who still refuse to abandon  
the universe of “facts”  
for the universe of ideas





COLLEGE DE FRANCE

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*Les professeurs du Collège de France vous prient de leur faire l'honneur  
d'assister à la série de leçons qui sera donnée par*

**M. Harjeet Singh GILL**

Professeur à l'Université de Jawaharlal Nehru (New Delhi)

*sur les sujets suivants :*

1. Les mots et les choses - *La signification dans les traditions bouddhiste et française*
2. Dharmakīrti et Abélard - *L'apoha vāda bouddhiste et le conceptualisme abélardien*
3. Les éléments idéologiques - *La théorie bouddhiste des noms et Condillac*
4. La dialectique de langue et parole - *Parole parlée et parole parlante*

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17 heures, dans la salle 5.*



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## Preface

The first four essays on Signification in Buddhist and French Traditions included here represent the revised version of the lectures delivered at the Collège de France in December 1998. I am grateful to Professor Claude Hagège for the cordial invitation. They are followed by a paper, *The Abélardian Tradition of Semiotics : Abélard, Condillac, Merleau-Ponty*, presented during the International Seminar on Theories of Signification since the Middle Ages, held at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, in 1993, and Abélard's *Tractatus de Intellectibus*, rendered into English recently at the Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. The publication of these essays coincides with the International Conference on Pierre Abélard à l'aube des Universités, at the University of Nantes, to celebrate the nine-hundredth birth anniversary of the French philosopher.

H S G



## DIGNĀGA

Cognition of empirical reality, *samvṛti-sat-jñāna*, is not a true perception because it superimposes something extraneous upon things which are only empirically true, *samvṛti-sat*, and thus functions through the conceptualisation of forms of those extraneous things. Inference and cognition which is its result, etc. are not perceptions because they arise through the conceptualisation of what formally has been perceived. And, we call the cognition itself, *pramāṇa*, literally, a means of cognising, because it is usually conceived to include the act of cognising, although primarily it is a result. Here we do not admit, as the Realists do, that the resulting cognition, *pramāṇa-phala*, differs from the means of cognition. The resulting cognition arises bearing in itself the form of the cognised object and thus is understood to include the act of cognising, *svayāpāra*. For this reason, it is metaphorically called, *pramāṇa*, the means of cognition, although it is devoid of this activity, *vyāpāra*. For instance, an effect is said to assume the form of its cause when it arises in conformity with its cause, although in fact it is devoid of the act of assuming the form of its cause...Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself, as subject, *svabhāsa*, and that of the object, *viśayābhāsa*. The cognising of itself as possessing these two appearances or the self-cognition, *svasamvitti*, is the result of the cognitive act.

*Pramāṇasamuccaya*

## DHARMAKĪRTI

Negation is the process through which either the absence of something or some practical application of the idea of an absent thing is deduced. Whether the facts be denied by way of an affirmation of something incompatible with them or through the negation of their causes, etc., everywhere negation, on analysis, refers to the possibilities of sensation ...Negation is the foundation of our concept of non-existence which underlies our knowledge of the laws of contradiction, of causality and of subalternation. If we do not have in our memory some negative experience, we will not remember contradiction and other relations, and then, in that case, the non-existence of a fact would not follow from the affirmation of an incompatible fact or from the negation of its cause.

*Nyāya-bindu*



## ŚĀNTIRAKṢITA

In the case of things created by imagination, there can be no universals subsisting in them ; because there is no possibility of the existence of the individuals that would make up the universals... Similarly, with regard to past and future things, if there is a cognition of an eternal universal, then no such pure universal (without the constituent individuals) can ever be apprehended. Or, if such a pure universal by itself were apprehended, then it could not be the universal of any particulars. Such a universal could not be manifestible by particulars ; just as the Himālaya is not manifestible by the Vindhya, nor can the universal be tied down to the particulars, nor lastly can the universal be dependent upon the particulars for its cognition because it is eternal and because it is apprehended purely by itself...

*Tattvasaṃgraha*

## ABELARD

It is the plurality of real things which establishes the universal character of the word, for there is no universal which does not have a plurality. The universality that the thing confers on the word, in itself, the thing does not possess. It is not the thing that gives to the word its signification. One considers the word as appellative according to the plurality of things it designates even though these things themselves may not have this signification and be not appellative.

*Logica*

## CONDILLAC

L'obscurité et la confusion viennent de ce qu'en prononçant les mêmes mots, nous croyons nous accorder à exprimer les mêmes idées ; quoique d'ordinaire les uns ajoutent à une idée complexe des idées partielles qu'un autre en retranche. De là il arrive que différentes combinaisons n'ont qu'un même signe, et que les mêmes mots ont dans différentes bouches et souvent dans la même des acceptions bien différentes. D'ailleurs, comme l'étude des langues, avec quelque peu de soin qu'elle se fasse, se laisse pas de demander quelque réflexion, on coupe court, et on rapporte les signes à des réalités, dont on n'a point d'idées. Tels sont dans le langage de bien des philosophes, les termes d'être, de substance, d'essence etc.

*L'art de penser*

## MERLEAU-PONTY

La pensée n'est rien d' "intérieur", elle n'existe pas hors du monde et hors des mots. Ce qui nous trompe là-dessus, ce qui nous fait croire à une pensée qui existerait pour soi avant l'expression, ce sont les pensées déjà constituées et déjà exprimées que nous pouvons rappeler à nous silencieusement et par lesquelles nous nous donnons l'illusion d'une vie intérieure. Mais en réalité ce silence prétendu est bruisant de parole, cette vie intérieure est un langage intérieur. La pensée "pure" se réduit à un certain vide de la conscience, à un vœu instantané. L'intention significative nouvelle ne se connaît elle-même qu'en recouvrant de significations déjà disponibles, résultat d'actes d'expression antérieurs. Les significations disponibles s'entrelacent soudain selon une loi inconnue, et une fois pour toutes un nouvel être culturel a commencé d'exister. La pensée et l'expression se constituent simultanément, lorsque notre acquis culturel se mobilise au service de cette loi inconnue, comme notre corps soudain se prête à un geste nouveau dans l'acquisition de l'habitude. La parole est un véritable geste et elle contient son sens comme le geste contient le sien.

*Phénoménologie de la perception*

## On Signification in Buddhist and French Traditions

*The Indian mediaeval logic is filled up with a struggle between Realism and Nominalism, just as the Middle Ages in Europe... There is an unmistakable parallelism between the European struggle and the Indian controversy. Its general lines are similar, but not its details... It can be mentioned that Abelard in his attempt at mediation between extreme Nominalism and extreme Realism expressed views which are partially found in India. He held that the Universal is more than a name, it is a predicate (sermo), even a natural predicate. We have seen that the universal as a general concept is always the predicate of a perceptual judgement, hence all universals are nothing but predicates.*

F. Th. Stcherbatsky in *Buddhist Logic*, Leningrad, 1930, Delhi reprint, 1984, pp. 451-453.

In this series of four lectures, I propose to present a typological comparison between the Buddhist theory of signification, *apoha vāda*, developed primarily in the sixth and the seventh centuries CE by the Buddhist thinkers, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and French *Conceptualism* of Pierre Abélard in the beginning of the twelfth century, Condillac in the eighteenth, and Merleau-Ponty in the twentieth. This comparison is typological and not historical. It is very much like Professor Hagège's essay on the Structures of Languages. Professor Hagège has shown that in spite of vast geographical and historical differences, there are striking

structural similarities in the different languages of the world. My project is quite modest. I have attempted to concentrate on a very restricted domain of signification in only two traditions at a few selected points of interaction.

It is shown that each philosopher is dialectically engaged with his own tradition, comes to terms with the prevalent ideologies of his times, and then proposes his own theory. What is important, however, is the fact that as the general dialectical engagement was similar, as the basic concern in both cases was the dominance of a certain realism, the philosophers of these two traditions were able to steer clear of the extreme positions adopted by the Realist and the Nominalist thinkers.

The Buddhist thinkers interacted with the prevalent schools of the realists, the Nyāya, the Vaiśeṣika, the Sāṃkhya and the Mīmāṃsā. These schools of thought had their internal differences but they had a common denominator in the realist philosophy, which considered that all reality, concrete or abstract, the things and their universal characteristics, could be apprehended by the senses. The Buddhist philosopher, Dignāga, in the sixth century CE argued that all reality is eternally in flux. We can apprehend only the point-instants. It is followed by the constitution of images of these point-instants, which resemble them without being ever identical with them. And, it is on these images that our intellect works and constitutes conceptual constructs. The things, the point-instants, play the role of stimulants, they lead to what is called the productive imagination. It is a creative process based on imagination and intellect. The conceptual constructs are the words or utterances of our language which we, human beings, construct. The Indian realists, on the other hand, believe that these utterances are already there. Their sounds are eternal and their meanings have been fixed once for all. The function of the grammarians is to describe this language of the gods, in its absolute purity in sound and signification. The realist philosophy of language gave



rise to a tradition of grammarians like Pāṇini and Bhartṛhari whose presentation of language was descriptive but whose purpose was prescriptive, normative.

The Buddhist thinkers, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, argued that as the words of language are conceptual constructs created by human imagination and intellect, they are subject to interpretation and comprehension at the same human level. There are neither eternal, pure sounds, nor eternal, pure meanings. Language, like any other reality, is not a static entity. It is eternally in flux, and as such, the conceptual constructs, the significations, are constantly being created. And, just like every other human creation, they are subject to construction and destruction.

In the French tradition, Pierre Abélard proposes the constitution of signification in very similar terms of *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *intellectus*, but dialectically he is engaged in steering clear of the extreme realists, the followers of Plato, and the extreme nominalists, the followers of Aristotle. For the realists, the universals and their designations, the words, are like any other thing. For the nominalists, the universals are only the products of imagination and their corresponding words are only sounds. As Abélard makes a distinction between *vox*, the physical sound, and *sermo*, the signifying utterance, he proposes a middle path, called *Conceptualism* by Victor Cousin.

In the eighteenth century, Condillac also insists that all knowledge has a basis in our senses but he argues that the senses remain senses for those who do not think, they become ideas only when we are able to transform them into the images of the things we are thinking of. And Condillac argues, our understanding of things or ideas depends upon the way we abstract partial ideas from the whole and we decompose and compare them with others in a manner that we can arrive at their

composition or original constitution. The proposition of innate ideas of Descartes and the ideas already made of the philosophers are ruled out, for according to Condillac, we can never understand something, which we ourselves have not composed. He also insists that words function as *aide-mémoires*, and without words we cannot make any progress in the evolution of ideologies. In this context, he criticises the English philosopher, Locke, who believed that for our proper understanding, the ideas interact with ideas alone without the mediation of words.

This introductory comparison shows very clearly that each philosopher is dialectically engaged with his own tradition, and the similarities must be considered only typologically and not historically. These typological comparisons are even more important, for as Lucien Goldmann says, nothing confirms better the value of a concept than the meeting of the minds of the thinkers coming from different positions and ignoring the works of each other :

*Rien ne confirme mieux la valeur d'une conception que les rencontres de penseurs venus de points différents et ignorant les démarches et les travaux des autres.* (1959. p.119).

We can now follow the Buddhist theory of perception in some detail. For Dignāga, the means of cognition are immediate and mediate, perception, *pratyakṣa* and inference, *anumāṇa*. There are only two means, for the object to be cognised has only two aspects. Apart from the particular, *sva-lakṣaṇa*, and the universal, *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*, there is no other object to be cognised. The object of perception is the particular and the object of inference is the universal. Perception is free from conceptual construction, *kalpanā*. First we cognise the thing of the colour, the particular, which is inexpressible. It is followed by the cognition of the universal, the colourness. This is achieved by the operation of the mind, which relates the colourness with its universal



characteristics and expresses the resulting cognition with a designation, a word, a name. According to Dignāga, a thing which is essentially inexpressible is expressed by a word only when it is associated with a name. Conceptual construction is the process through which we associate a name with a thing.

The Vaiśeṣikas and the Naiyāyikas believe that every existing thing possesses both individuality and universality. When we perceive a thing, we perceive it vaguely without differentiating its particularity, *vyakti*, and its genus, *jāti*. Dignāga argues that there is an essential distinction between these two aspects. The particularity can never be conceptualised. The genus, the universal characteristic, is conceptually constituted by the mind by a process of generalisation based on several similar things. The universal exists only in our mind, in our head. It has no sensuous reality. This distinction between the two types has a corresponding distinction in the means of cognition. Perception is meant only for the particulars, and inference only for the universals. This theory of the Buddhist thinker differs radically from that of the Nyāya where these two means coalesce.

For Dharmakīrti, the particular has the power to produce effects, is specific, is not expressible by a word, and can be apprehended without depending upon any verbal convention. The universal, on the other hand, has no power to produce effects, is common to several similar things, is denotable by a word, and cannot be apprehended without the verbal conventions. Dharmakīrti insists on the unreality of the universal, and as such for him only the particular is the object of cognition.

For the Naiyāyikas, the universal characteristics, genus, quality, etc., which depend upon verbal designations are real entities, *padārthas*. Dignāga argues that they are only conceptual constructions and do not refer to any real entities. What is expressed by the word, cow, is not any real entity, cowness, but the exclusion of non-cows.

For the Indian realists, the followers of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, the external world is cognised in its material reality. All cognitions are based on our senses; the cognising soul sifts and orders them in classes and sub-classes. Consciousness is pure consciousness. There are no intermediate images. The external reality is illuminated directly. The structure of this external world corresponds perfectly with what we find in our cognition, and with the categories of language. The universals are external realities. If substances are real, the universals residing in them are also real. As such, all these aspects of reality are equally amenable to sense perception.

For the Buddhists, the cognitive element of our mind is limited to the movement when we become aware of the presence of the object. It is followed by the synthetical operation of the intellect, which constructs the image of the object. The senses apprehend, the intellect constructs, says Dharmakīrti. The fire which cooks and burns is a real fire. The fire which is imagined, which neither cooks nor burns, is not a real fire. It is a conceptual construct which helps us to understand the nature of all fires. What is immediately apprehended in sensation is only one moment. What is distinctly conceived is always a chain of moments. Sensation leads us to the apprehension of reality, particularity, vividness and efficient affirmation. Conception or the constructed image, on the other hand, leads us to the cognition of generality, logic, necessity, and distinctness. The object conceived is an object imagined. To conceive means to imagine, to construct an object in imagination.

In inference, we deal with an imagined object, an imagined fire, an imagined jar. It is always an affair of an absent thing which cannot be apprehended by our senses, it can only be imagined. In perception, we cognise the particular and construct the symbol. In inference, we cognise the symbol and construct the particular. The imagined image of the blue arises at first indefinitely, it is then settled as a definite self-conscious

idea of a blue patch, in contrast with other colours which are not blue. Thus the coordination of the blue as the source of such a definitely circumscribed image and the imagined distinct representation will then appear as its result, because it is through coordination and contrast that the definite image of the blue is realised. (Dharmakīrti, *Nyāya-bindu*, 46.6.).

To think actively, says Dharmottara, is to think dichotomisingly. The universe of discourse is divided into two halves, the blue and the non-blue. The definite thought of the blue is nothing more than the definite exclusion of the non-blue. It is the fixation of a point of demarcation which has nothing blue in itself. According to Dharmottara, the different and the contrary cannot be conceived so long as the non-existence of the similar is not realised. Otherness and opposition are realised as representing the negation of the similar, because such is the import of this otherness and opposition. Negation is conceived as the absence of the similar directly, otherness and opposition are conceived as the absence of the similar indirectly.

For Dharmakīrti there is contradiction in a couple whose essence is posited in a complete mutual exclusion without any intermediate. From the ontological point of view, the mutual opposition is existence and non-existence, from the logical point of view, it is affirmation and negation, dynamically, it is mutual repulsion, statically, it is position and opposition. From the point of view of relation, it is a symmetrical relation or a correlation, and this mutually reciprocated relation leads to complete reciprocity of the two elements.

According to Dharmakīrti, there are three aspects of signification : *negation*, *identity* and *causation*. The predicate is either denied or affirmed. When it is denied, it has three aspects. When it is affirmed, it is existentially identical with it or its effect. When we say, on some



particular place, there is no jar. It implies that it is not perceived although the conditions of perception are fulfilled. The object of inference is constituted at a particular spot, visible to the observer. An object which is in the condition of cognisability is nothing else but a visible object. The non-cognition of such an object is called negation of a hypothetical visibility. The simple unqualified absence of cognition, since it itself contains no assertion at all, can convey no knowledge. But when we speak of negation whose essence is negation of hypothetical perceptibility, these words may be regarded as necessarily implying a bare place where there is no jar and the cognition of that same bare place. Negation means the presence of a bare spot as well as the fact of its cognition. (*Nb.* 22.7-20).

Identity is a reason for deducing a property when the subject alone is by itself sufficient for that deduction... A predicate whose presence is dependent on the mere existence of the reason and is dependent upon no other condition besides the mere existence of the fact constituting the reason, such is the predicate which is inseparable from the reason and can be analytically deduced. When such a predicate is deduced, the reason represents the same fact of existence as the predicate, it is not different, it is identical. (*Nb.* 16.23.20).

The ultimate reality, the entity underlying the logical reason is either the same as the entity underlying the predicate, or it is causally derived from it. In reality, there are only two necessary relations, identity and causation. Identity with the predicated fact means that the mark represents the predicate itself, its essence. Since the essence of a logical reason is contained in the predicate, it is dependent upon the latter and is invariably concomitant with it. But identity is not the only possible relation between the logical mark and what can be deduced from it. There is also a relation of causality. The mark can represent an effect of the fact whose existence is then inferred from it... It is simply because identity and causation

belong either to a comprehended reality or to an effect. Inferential reference to reality is possible exclusively on this basis... since the possibility of deducing one fact from another is based exclusively upon these two relations of underlying identity and causation, and since they, in turn, are founded exclusively upon either the presence of a comprehended attribute or upon the fact that a result must have a cause, the establishment of reality, or affirmation, is possible only upon the basis of these two relations. (*Nb.* 23-35).

According to Dharmakīrti, Negation is the process through which either the absence of something or some practical application of the idea of an absent thing is deduced. Whether the facts be denied by way of an affirmation of something incompatible with them or through the negation of their causes, everywhere negation, on analysis, refers to the possibilities of sensation... All formulations of negative deduction are reduced to direct negation, because whatsoever be the facts denied, they are all susceptible of sense perception. They refer to sensibilia only for the following reason. In order to establish the subalternation of two facts or their causal relations, we must have had some experience of them. We must have had some perception of their presence and some experience of their absence. Consequently, when incompatible and other facts are being denied either by the way of an affirmation of their correlative part or by elimination of their causes, we must know that this refers to sensibilia, only to such objects whose presence and absence have been alternately observed. The knowledge of the absence of something is always produced only by the repudiation of an imagined presence. Therefore, if we remember some cases of contradiction, of causality or of different extension, we need to have in our memory some negative experience. Negation is the foundation of our concept of non-existence which is underlying our knowledge of the laws of contradiction, of causality and of subalternation. (*Nb.* 46.38.6.11.14.39.6).

This brief presentation of the Buddhist theory of signification in the language and idiom of the classical texts shows not only the basic tenets of this theory but also the intellectual and ideological preoccupation of that period in the history of Indian thought. We will now follow the distinctive features of the theories of signification of Abélard, Condillac and Merleau-Ponty in the French tradition.

First of all, why Abélard? The modern French intellectual tradition begins with Abélard for a number of reasons. Abélard epitomises the most significant epistemological break in the classical European philosophical tradition since Saint Augustine. To quote M. H. Carré:

*“Saint Augustine exercised a cardinal influence on all speculation from the earlier to the last phase of medieval thought. From him more than any other authority, sprang the pronounced realism that persisted into modern times. In the eleventh century there appeared a new view of knowledge that conflicted with the spiritual theory of Augustine and with his Neo-Platonic Realism. The first and foremost critic of the older tradition was Peter Abailard.”* (M.H.Carré, *Realists and Nominalists*, Oxford, 1946, p.vi.)

And another testimony about Abélard's theory of mental images :

*“Abailard's treatment of mental images (as we now refer to the likeness of “imaginary forms”) is extraordinary and has, so far as I know, no precedent in Western philosophy”.* (Martin Tweedale, *Abailard on Universals*, North-Holland, 1976, p. 187).

And for the historian, Jacques Le Goff :

*“Il est la première grande figure d'intellectuel modern — dans les limites de la modernité du XIIème siècle — c'est la premier professeur... Abélard rentre en triomphateur et s'établit sur la montagne Sainte-Geneviève. Le sort est jeté. La culture parisienne*



*aura pour centre à jamais non l'île de la cité mais la montagne, mais la Rive Gauche : un homme a fixé, cette fois le destin d'un quartier.*" (Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au moyen âge*, Paris, 1960, pp. 40-42.).

And finally, Victor Cousin :

*"L'université de Paris est au moyen âge la grande école de l'Europe. Or, l'homme qui par ses qualités et par ses défauts, par la hardiesse de ses opinions, l'éclat de sa vie, la passion innée de la polémique et un rare talent d'enseignement, concourut le plus à accroître et à répandre le goût des études et ce mouvement intellectuel d'où est sortie au treizième siècle l'université de Paris, cet homme est Pierre Abélard."* (Victor Cousin, *Philosophie du moyen âge*, Paris, 1866, p.1).

In other words, Pierre Abélard is the foremost representative of the new emerging thought that administers an epistemological cut on the philosophical tradition since Saint Augustine. He is the first modern intellectual who is literally the founder of the Latin Quarter and all that it represents in critical, intellectual, cultural tradition in thought and action. He is the first professor of modernity as asserts Jacques Le Goff.

For us, with his theory of Conceptualism, Abélard is the founder of a French intellectual tradition that has, throughout its eight hundred years of history, stayed away from both English empiricism and German idealism. This middle path inaugurated by Abélard is the most distinctive feature of this tradition.

Abélard begins his argument in *Tractatus de intellectibus* with the three aspects of the constitution of signification : *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *intellectus*. The sensorial perception of corporeal reality requires a

corporeal instrument. The point of departure of all understanding is our sensuous experience. This is followed by imagination and intellection. Imagination is nothing but a certain souvenir of the sensuous contact with reality. But the image of a thing or an experience in the domain of *imaginaire* is always vague, for as in sensations, in imagination also, reason does not play any rôle. Intellection does not need any corporeal instrument. It operates on the images of things, existing or non-existing, corporeal or non-corporeal. Its function is to comprehend and discern the nature of things.

Imagination and sensation are interrelated, and in a way, operate in the same manner. Sensation operates on the things present, imagination, on the things absent. However, as both are devoid of the faculty of reason, the forms of things they correspond to are always vague and confused. There is no perceptive judgement.

There are two types of intellections, simple and composed. The intellections are considered, simple, if they are constituted of several elements in succession. A simple intellection may not be entirely devoid of parts but what matters is whether it is taken as one unit or a succession of units. The word, man, refers to animal, rational, mortal, and normally we conceive it as one simple intellection. A composite intellection is the one where we have a succession of words, like in a sentence.

As there are three modes in the domain of perception, the mode of being, *modus essendi*, the mode of intellection, *modus intelligendi*, and the mode of signification, *modus significandi*, it all depends upon how the conceptual constructs are constituted. There can be different intellections for each different word or each different nature or characteristic of a thing, or one unique intellection of different things of several words in a sentence, of a unique discourse. Very much like Bhartṛhari's *sphota*, Abélard talks about one single impulse of



articulation and comprehension. The liaison, the division, the disjunction follow one intellection where our spirit operates with any one single impulsion of intelligence, says Abélard. Our spirit acquires one single liaison when it considers the succession of things as one single constituent or entity. It leads to one affirmation, to one continuous impulsion of intellect, to the conception of one coherent utterance. When several liaisons meet in one intellection in a manner that they all lead to only one entity, the different liaisons are treated as one unit. It is necessary that this intellection that the spirit has acquired with a continuous impulsion of the intelligence be one single intellection. On the other hand, there are multiple intellections where there is no liaison between different utterances and the divisions and disjunctions continue to maintain their separate entity. In that case, they do not become a part of the whole, of the totality or of the structure of the discourse.

Intellection operates otherwise, says Abélard, when instead of one single impulsion, it follows the procedure of *division*, *disjunction* and *abstraction*. The intellection that divides is the intellection of Negation as one says that “a man is not a horse”, “the healthy is not sick”, or, “the one who is standing is not sitting”. But the one who operates a disjunction creates an intellection of affirmation, if he does not create distinctions between one thing and an other, and of several things that it conceives in the spirit, he constitutes only one intellection when one says that that is a man or a horse, or he is healthy or sick, or he is standing or sitting. We must make a clear distinction between the modes of existence and the modes of intellection, for there are innumerable modes of intellection of a thing which are not at all the modes of its existence: *multi namque et innumerabiles modi sunt intelligentie cuiuslibet rei, qui non sunt existentie ipsius, sicut ex suprapositis liquet...* (*Tractatus*, 82).

When we obtain an intellection by abstraction, we conceive a thing other than the way it really exists. In abstracting one specific nature out

of multiple natures that a given thing is constituted of, we conceive it *indifferently*. When we mentally abstract a characteristic, for example, the rationality of man, without paying attention to other features, of animality, of mortality, we conceive it independently and separately from others even though in reality man is indivisible. There is no nature or characteristic that in reality subsists indifferently. Every thing, every individuality, is numerically one whole entity.

In his article *Non-réalisme et platonisme chez Abélard* (1981) Jean Jolivet argues that for Abélard, *sermo*, or noun, *nomen sive sermo*, is opposed to both *vox* and *res*. It is in fact a resultant of a human institution, while *vox* and *res* are the works of nature, *naturae creatio sola operatione naturae*. The rapport between a *vox* and a *sermo* is the same as between a stone and a statue. The state of stone is due to God while the state of the statue is due to human initiative. The universal is not the *vox* but the *sermo*, which is a *vox* charged with signification. It implies that language by itself does not necessarily correspond to either the real or the thought. In fact, it constitutes a third sphere. Our intellections lead to the common forms or conceptions which are signified by the universals, and Abélard adds, that to conceive forms by means of nouns implies that they are signified by them. When we present them as different from intellections, we present the signification of nouns which negotiates between the real and the conceptual. Abélard argues that even though there is no precedent in the classical tradition, no authority to attest his theory, it is perfectly justified. In the rapport between the signifier and the signified, there is the union of the real, thought and language. The nouns and the verbs signify the things by constituting a corresponding intellection, and at the same time, they designate intellections of the one who pronounces the word and the other who listens to it. The communication process, as such, is between two persons who exchange their respective intellections.

On the one hand, Abélard presents the universals and their significations, and on the other, he analyses the functioning of the terms of the propositions, the *dicta*, and the *modals*. The first investigation, the semantic, brings Abélard closer to Platonism and Bernard de Chartre, the second, the syntactic, takes him away from it, for the noun, generic or specific, is a predicate and is placed in the proposition. The universal here cannot be a thing. The study of the terms of proposition leads Abélard to go beyond pure signification, towards the theory of the *suppositio*, and that of the modals to the constructions, where there is no universal. They are obviously the two sides of the same thought and this is why the epithet, *Non-realism*, or *Conceptualism*, is affixed to the theory of signification of Abélard.

The second major figure in the French tradition that continues the Abélardian theory of signification is the eighteenth century philosopher, Condillac, whose approach is denominated *Linguistic Conceptualism* by the historian of linguistic thought, Sylvain Auroux. Whether Auroux attached the same significance to the epithet, Conceptualism, as did Victor Cousin, and whether he perceived an epistemological correlation between the enterprises of Abélard and Condillac requires further investigation, but this coincidence is not without considerable significance.

In any case, the basic premises of Condillac are very similar to that of Abélard. There is emphasis on the senses as the main source of perception, followed by the specific roles of imagination and intellect. Also, just like Abélard, there is a quasi independence accorded to the words of language which differentiates Condillac from his otherwise source of inspiration, the English philosopher, Locke.

Our reflection has two objects, argues Condillac in *L'Art de penser*, 1796, the actual sensation and the sensation that we have had earlier, these two interact to crystallise each other. As the sensible objects are



complex, we can compare only by means of abstractions. This operation of abstraction enables us to see what is common to them and what distinguishes one from the other. We then distribute them in different classes. Our senses cannot apprehend abstract ideas or ideas in general. We can see a given man or a given tree but we can never see a man in general, a tree in general. As for the abstract ideas, like rationality or hardness, there is not the least possibility of their being subjected to any sensorial observation. The ideas considered thus become intellectual even though to begin with they were only sensations. They are no more the object of the faculty that feels, they are now the object of the faculty of intellect, that abstracts, that compares and that judges. Our memory plays a very important role in this operation. If our memory fails or if it is confused, our comprehension will be confused also. It is therefore necessary that to maintain the exactitude of our ideas, we must follow our knowledge from its very beginning and we must observe its generation.

To analyse, says Condillac, is to decompose, to compare and to apprehend rapports. But we decompose only to show, as far as possible, the origin and the generation of things. We must present the partial ideas, the abstract ideas, from the point of view that we can observe the reconstruction of the whole that we analyse. The one who decomposes haphazardly leads only to abstractions. The one who does not abstract all the qualities of an object, presents only incomplete analyses. The one who does not present abstract ideas in the order that could facilitate the knowledge of the generation of ideas leads to obscure analyses. Analysis, as such, is the entire decomposition of an object, the distribution of its parts in the order where its generation becomes easy.

Analysis is the true secret of all discoveries, continues Condillac, for it leads us to the origin of things. It always deals with a few ideas at a time in the simplest possible gradation, followed by the comparisons of

the rapport between different ideas within different objects. We must follow the generation of ideas and not the definition of things which lead only to the unnecessary disputes.

For Descartes, the simplest things are “innate” ideas, the general principles and abstract notions that he considers as the source of knowledge. In the method that Condillac proposes, the simplest ideas are the first particular ideas which are derived from the senses. These are the basic materials of our knowledge that we combine to constitute complex and abstract ideas whose analysis helps us comprehend their mutual rapports. The first ideas are not simple ideas but the ideas which are derived from senses and which must not be confused with abstract notions or the general principles of the philosophers. Furthermore, for Descartes, one should begin with the definition of things. Condillac argues that on the contrary, one should begin with the search of their properties. If the notions that we are able to acquire are only different collections of simple ideas that the experience enables us gather under certain names, it is more natural to constitute, by looking for the ideas in the same order that our experience provides us with, than to begin with the definitions, to deduce finally the different properties of the things. The obscurity and confusion in our communication is due to the fact that while pronouncing the same words, we believe to have attached to them the same ideas, though in fact, we generally add to or subtract from a complex idea a number of simple ideas. As such, different combinations have the same signs and the same words with different speakers have different significations.

On the role of the words in the development of knowledge, Condillac argues that the words become absolutely necessary when our reasoning becomes complex. We cannot apprehend in one single reflex all the judgements and the rapports that it represents. We consider separately the different parts, we develop them one after the other, we accord word-

signs to each idea, to each judgement, to each rapport. With this method, we discover slowly step by step what we cannot hold in one reflex and this decomposition that seems frivolous in the beginning becomes absolutely necessary when the reasoning is composite and complex. And with this argument, Condillac criticises Locke who believed that the spirit makes mental propositions where it joins or separates ideas without the intervention of words and the best way to arrive at knowledge is to consider ideas by themselves. It is obvious that Locke in this argument follows the fourteenth century nominalist tradition of Guillaume d'Ockham with which Condillac differs radically. It is probably for this reason that Sylvain Auroux (1981, p. v) commented that instead of nominalism, the Condillacian enterprise should be considered as *Linguistic Conceptualism*.

The last stop in our typological journey is Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Beginning with the Saussurian *langue/parole* polarity which, for all practical purposes, for Saussure meant the social and the individual aspect of language, Merleau-Ponty attempts to present our communication system as a dialectics between *parole parlée* and *parole parlante*. Instead of the Saussurian *états de langue* which are more or less homogeneous, Merleau-Ponty, like his predecessors, Abélard and Condillac in the French tradition, and Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in the Buddhist tradition, introduces the concept of the dynamicity of the communication process. It is an affair of the physical acquisition of language and the conceptual appropriation of the signifying ensembles. It is a domain of the imaginaire, of the conceptual constructs, where with the instruments of communication at our disposal, the *parole parlée*, the given, the language which is already there, the cultural norm, we are engaged in a continuous dialectical interaction to go beyond the given, to say what has never been said before, to constitute conceptual constructs for the other, with the help of the language in praxis, the *parole parlante*.



It is a creative process where the basic tools, the words and utterances, the signifiers are used not only to transmit the significations already known but to transcend the limits of signification imposed on us in such a way that even though there is no apparent break, there is a continuous evolution. The semantic field is surcharged with new significations without creating any upheaval in the prevalent system of communication.

One can make a distinction between *parole parlante* and *parole parlée*, says Merleau-Ponty. The former is the speech where the significative intention is found at its origin. The existence here is polarised in a certain signification which cannot be defined by any natural object. The *parole* is the excess of our existence over the natural being. The act of our expression constitutes a linguistic universe and a cultural universe. The *parole parlée* functions here as an acquired fortune, but with the help of these acquisitions, other acts of authentic expression, those of the writer, the artist, the philosopher, become possible. This opening, continuously created in the plenitude of the being, is what conditions the first words of the child, of the writer, and the construction of the words as conceptual utterances. Language registers a signification which is both gestural and existential. The speaking subject begins to take specific positions in the universe of signification. As our utterances, the *parole parlante*, are more and more surcharged with our existential experiences, the phonetic gestures realise, for the speaking subject and for those who communicate with him, a certain structure of experience, a certain modulation of existence.

Merleau-Ponty insists that there is nothing internal to thought. It does not exist outside our world and outside our words. What gives the impression that thought exists before its expression is the thought already constituted, which we can recall in silence and which gives an illusion of internalisation. But this so-called silence is surcharged with words. The

“pure” thought is reduced to a certain void of consciousness. The significations at our disposal interact with those which are being created and a new cultural and linguistic being begins to emerge. Thought and expression are constituted mutually, simultaneously. The linguistic gesture, like all other gestures, itself constitutes its signification. The word is not a sign of a thought in the same manner as the smoke announces the existence of fire. In fact, word and thought are enveloped within each other. The signification is held in the word, and the word is the external existence of signification. Under the conceptual signification of the words, there is the existential signification, which is not just expressed by it but which inhabits its very being and which is inseparable from it. A successful expression serves not only as an *aide-mémoire* for the reader or the writer, it establishes the signification as the being in the very heart of the text, it activates the world of signification. The significations do not accompany the words, they transcend them, and the reader and the writer are both carried away by their existential movement.

As the child grows mentally, the engagement with this given linguistic parameter becomes dialectical, and from the purely acquisitional exercises, the speaking subject is transformed into a thinking being, and the communication structures are appropriated with due deviations due to existential understanding of each significative move. From the Buddhist perspective, the process of conceptual constructions begins in this negotiating space. Abélard had talked about the constitution of signification by the intellect, and Condillac had laid very heavy emphasis on the “reciprocal commerce” for the usage of language as its most fundamental characteristic. Since the absolute sanctity and purity of the linguistic imposition is ruled out, human intellect begins to constitute conceptual constructs which correspond with the given perceptions, but which, at the same time, transform and transcend the present, which is heavily laden with the norms of the past, thereby leading the thinking



beings to ever new horizons. And, Merleau-Ponty insists that there is no unique significance of history. The existential realisations remain equidistant from both materialism and spiritualism.

It is obvious that this delineation of the typology of the Buddhist and the French traditions is based on a certain perception, and that we have touched only a few points in the long history of the two movements. Several more and deeper studies are required to explore this vast domain but we cannot help noticing the striking similarities. One can also not ignore the fact that this conceptual middle path of the French tradition is perceived as such by the corresponding English empiricism and German idealism within which the European intellectual engagements are realised.

## REFERENCES

The advent of Dignāga is indeed one of the greatest events in the history of Indian philosophy. He can as a matter of right claim a place among those pioneers of human thought who discovered an eternal truth and made a lasting contribution to human knowledge... Some time during the fifth century AD, there appeared in the firmament of Indian philosophy a brilliant star in the person of Dignāga, the founder of Buddhist logic and epistemology. Regarded by the Tibetans as an ornament of Jambūdvīpa, he was one of the greatest thinkers that India has ever produced. Subsequent philosophical thought in India was dominated by him directly or indirectly for six long centuries. He revolutionised Indian philosophy by introducing into it the theory of radical distinction between two mutually exclusive sources of knowledge - direct sense-perception, *grahana*, and intellect or thought, *vikalpa* or *adhyasāya* ... (D. N. Shastri in *Critique of Indian Realism*, Agra University, 1964. pp. 1- 5.)

Abelard's treatment of the problem of universals was really decisive, in the sense that it gave a death-blow to ultra-realism by showing how one could deny the latter doctrine without at the same time being obliged to deny all objectivity to

genera and species... The foundation of the Thomist doctrine of moderate realism had thus been laid before the thirteenth century, and indeed we may say that it was Abelard who really killed ultra-realism. When St Thomas declares that universals are not subsistent things but exist only in singular things, he is re-echoing what Abelard and John of Salisbury (a student of Abelard) had said before him... Frederick Copleston in *A History of Philosophy*, Burns and Oates, Kent, 1950, Vol 2, pp.146-151.)

### DIGNĀGA

Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself as subject, *svābhāsa*, and that of the object, *viśayābhāsa*. The cognising of itself as possessing these two appearances, or self-cognition, *svasaṃvitti*, is the result of the cognitive act. Why? Because the determination of the object, *artha niścaya*, conforms to it. (Dignāga, On perception, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, trans. Masaaki Hattori, Harvard University Press, 1968, p.28).

The cognition where there is no conceptual construction is perception. What, then is the conceptual construction? ...the association of name, *nāman*, genus, *jāti*, with a thing perceived, which results in verbal designation of the thing. In the case of arbitrary words, *yadṛccha śabda*, proper nouns, a thing, *artha*, distinguished by a name is expressed by a word such as *dittha*. In the case of genus word, *jāti śabda*, common noun, a thing distinguished by a genus is expressed by a word such as *go*, cow. In the case of quality words, *guṇa śabda*, adjectives, a thing distinguished by a quality is expressed by a word such as *śukla*, white. In the case of action words, *kriyā śabda*, verbal nouns, a thing distinguished by an action is expressed by a word such as, *pācaka*, a cook, to cook. In the case of substance words, *dravya śabda*, a thing distinguished by a substance is expressed by a word such as, *daṇḍin*, a staff bearer or *viśāṇin*, horned, a horn bearer. (*Ibid.*, p.25).

### DHARMAKĪRTI

Every reality, indeed, has its real essence which is the particular, the unique and a general, imagined aspect. That which is apprehended in direct perception is the

unique. The object of cognition is really double, the *prima facie* apprehended and the definitely realised. The first is that aspect which appears directly in the first moment. The second is the form which is constructed in a perceptive judgement. The directly perceived and the distinctly conceived are indeed two different things. What is immediately apprehended in sensation is only one moment. What is distinctly conceived is always a compact chain of moments cognised in a construction on the basis of sensation, e.g., this is blue. And, just this constructed synthesis of a chain of moments is finally realised by direct perception, because a unique moment can never be realised in definite cognition. (from Dharmakīrti, *Nyāya-bindu*, with a commentary by Dharmottara, trans. F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Volume II, Delhi reprint, 1984, 12.15-21).

What we call negation is not absence of knowledge, but a positive reality, and assertory cognition of it. The simple unqualified absence of cognition, since it itself contains no assertion at all, can convey no knowledge. But we speak of negation whose essence is a negation of hypothetical perceptibility, these words may be regarded as necessarily implying a bare place where there is no jar and the cognition of that same place. Negation means the presence of a bare place as well as the fact of its cognition. (*Ibid.* 19-20).

### ŚĀNTIRAKṢITA

In the case of things created by imagination, there can be no universals subsisting in them ; because there is no possibility of the existence of the individuals that would make up the universals... Similarly, with regard to past and future things, if there is a cognition of an eternal universal, then no such pure universal (without the constituent individuals) can ever be apprehended. Or, if such a pure universal by itself were apprehended, then it could not be the universal of any particulars. Such a universal could not be manifestible by particulars; just as the Himālaya is not manifestible by the Vindhya, nor can the universal be tied down to the particulars, nor lastly can the universal be dependent upon the particulars for its cognition because it is eternal and because it is apprehended purely by itself. There is also no possibility of its being dependent upon any such thing as the contact of its own substratum with the sense-organ concerned. Consequently this universal could either be apprehended at all times, or not apprehended at any time at all. As



regards its capacity to bring about its own cognition by itself, it may or may not have this capacity, whichever way it is, it would be unshakeable, because it is itself permanent. (Śāntirakṣita, *Tattvasaṃgraha*, with a commentary by Kamalaśīla, Volume I, trans. Ganganath Jha, 1937, Delhi reprint, 1986, 789-795).

#### ABELARD

The signification of things is different from that of the words, *voces*. The letters represent sounds as a statue, its model. They signify by resemblance. Finally, there is the suggestive signification of the signs. These three types of signification depend upon convention, *institutio*, but the things, independent of all convention, can signify due to habit, *consuetudo* or due to rapport, *habitus*. (*Super Periermenias*, ed., B. Geyer, Münster, 1919, 335, 33-37.)

If a word signifies, it is because something is added to its physical being, *essentia*; this something is its significative function, *officium significandi*... The sound, just like the things it represents in a given language remains the same from one community to another, it belongs to the sphere of things, which is natural, the significance, on the other hand, is lost due to the diversity of languages, it depends upon an institution, a human convention, *positio hominum, voluntas hominum*... *Sup. Per.*, 320, 12-27.)

Words generate intellections and thereby shed light on the nature of things. One can infer a double series of correspondences between words and intellections and between intellections and things, and consequently, a correspondence between words and things... It is possible to consider a proposition either as a verbal object, or as the intellection it generates, or according to the thing on which it is based... The rapport between the word and the thing is mediatory... The word leads to the idea, the idea to the thing... (*Dialectica*, 390, 8-13.)

The function of words is to signify; it is their *raison d'être* and a logician who deals with language deals with significations. But the words have their own proper nature. Logic, therefore, must correlate the study of signification with the study of the signifiers, not only inasmuch as they are signifiers, but also as they are submitted to regulations which are not those of things signified. The correspondence of language

with the real is global. Logic does not bypass it but it must take care of all the aspects, of things and words; hence, the integration of grammar with logic which also gives rise to what is called, the speculative grammar... (*Sup. Praed.* 223,29.)

Universality should neither be attributed to things nor to *voces* but to *sermones*. The *sermo*, the name, is instituted by man, while *vox* is the creation of nature. In its being, in *essentia*, it is identical with *sermo*, but this identity is of the order of a stone and a statue. One can attribute it to the latter without attributing it to the former, which as a thing, is necessarily individual... Universal is a human creation... (*Sup. Proph.* III, 518,9.)

### CONDILLAC

Pour un être qui ne réfléchit pas, pour nous-mêmes, dans ces moments où quoiqu'éveillés nous ne faisons que végéter, les sensations ne sont que des sensations, et elles deviennent des idées, que lorsque la réflexion nous les fait considérer comme images de quelque chose. (from Condillac, *Traité de l'art de penser*, 1796, Vrin reprint, 1981, p.236).

Il (Locke) s'est aperçu que les noms sont nécessaires pour les idées faites sans modèles, mais il n'en a pas saisi la vraie raison. "L'esprit dit-il, ayant mis de la liaison entre les parties détachées de ses idées complexes, cette union qui n'a aucun fondement particulier dans la nature, cesseroit s'il n'y avoit quelque chose qui la maintînt". Ce raisonnement devoit, comme il l'a fait, l'empêcher de voir la nécessité des signes pour les notions de substances; car ces notions ayant un fondement dans la nature, c'était une conséquence que la réunion de leurs idées simples se conservât dans l'esprit sans le secours des mots...voici ce qui a empêché Locke de découvrir combien les signes sont nécessaires à l'exercice des opérations de l'âme. Il suppose que l'esprit fait des propositions mentales dans lesquelles il joint ou sépare les idées sans l'intervention des mots. Il prétend même que la meilleure voie pour arriver à des connoissance, seroit de considérer les idées en elles-mêmes...Il faut bien peu de chose pour arrêter les plus grands génies dans leur progrès. (*Ibid.*, p.238).

Les philosophes ne font des raisonnemens si obscures et si confus, que parce qu'ils ne soupçonnent pas qu'il y ait des idées qui soient l'ouvrage de l'esprit; ou

que, s'ils le soupçonnent, ils sont incapables d'en découvrir la génération. Prévenus que les idées sont innées, ou que, telles qu'elles sont, elles ont été bien faites; ils croient n'y devoir rien changer, et ils adoptent avec confiance. Comme on ne peut bien analyser que les idées qu'on a soi-même formées avec ordre, leur analyses sont presque toujours défectueuses. Ils étendent ou restreignent mal à propos la signification des mots, ils la changent sans s'en apercevoir, ou même ils rapportent les mots à des notions vagues et à des réalités unintelligibles. Il faut, qu'on me permette de le répéter, il faut donc se faire une nouvelle combinaison d'idées; commencer par les plus simples que les sens transmettent; en former des notions complexes, qui, en se combinant à leur tour, en produiront d'autres, et ainsi de suite. Pourvu que nous consacrons des noms distincts à chaque collection, cette méthode ne peut manquer de nous faire éviter l'erreur. (*Ibid.*, p.312).

#### MERLEAU-PONTY

La chose est reprise intérieurement par nous, reconstituée et vécue par nous en tant qu'elle est liée à un monde dont nous portons les structures fondamentales et dont elle n'est qu'une des consécutions possible. (from Merleau-Ponty in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, 1945, p.377).

Les mots ne peuvent être les "fortresses de la pensée", et la pensée ne peut chercher l'expression que si les paroles sont par elle-mêmes un texte compréhensible et si la parole possède une puissance de signification qui lui soit propre... Nous découvrons ici sous la signification conceptuelle des paroles une signification existentielle, qui n'est pas seulement traduite par elle, mais qui les habite et en est inséparable. (*Ibid.*, p.212).

Les significations disponibles, c'est-à-dire les actes d'expression antérieurs établissent entre les sujets parlants un monde commun auquel la parole actuelle et neuve se réfère comme le geste au monde sensible. Et le sens de la parole n'est rien d'autre que la façon dont elle manie ce monde linguistique ou dont elle module sur ce clavier de signification acquises... Il est vrai que le problème n'est que déplacé : ces significations disponibles elles-mêmes, comment se sont-elles constituées? Une fois le langage formé, on conçoit que la parole puisse signifier comme un geste sur le fond mental commun. Mais les formes syntaxiques et celles du



vocabulaire, qui sont ici présupposées, portent-elles en elles-mêmes leur sens? On voit bien ce qu'il y a de commun au geste et à son sens, par exemple, à l'expression des émotions et aux émotions mêmes, le sourire, le visage détendu, l'allégresse des gestes contiennent réellement le rythme d'action, le mode d'être au monde qui sont la joie même. Au contraire entre le signe verbal et sa signification le lien n'est-il pas tout fortuit, comme le montre assez l'existence de plusieurs langages? Et la communication des éléments du langage entre le "premier homme qui ait parlé" et le second n'a-t-elle pas été nécessairement d'un tout autre type que la communication par gestes? C'est ce qu'on exprime d'ordinaire en disant que le geste ou la mimique émotionnelle sont des "signes naturels", la parole un "signe conventionnel". Mais les conventions sont un mode de relation tardif entre les hommes, elles supposent une communication préalable, et il faut replacer le langage dans ce courant communicatif. (*Ibid.*, p.217).

On pourrait dire, en reprenant une célèbre distinction, que les *langages*, c'est-à-dire les systèmes de vocabulaire et de syntaxe constitués, les "moyen d'expression" qui existent empiriquement, sont le dépôt et la sédimentation des actes de parole dans lesquels le sens informulé non seulement trouve le moyen de se traduire au dehors, mais encore acquiert l'existence pour soi-même, et est véritablement créé comme sens. Ou encore on pourrait distinguer une *parole parlante* et une *parole parlée*. La première est celle dans laquelle l'intention significative se trouve à l'état naissant. Ici l'existence se polarise dans un certain "sens" qui ne peut être défini par aucun objet naturel, c'est au-delà de l'être qu'elle cherche à se rejoindre et c'est pourquoi elle crée la parole comme appui empirique de son propre non-être. La parole est l'excès de notre existence sur l'être naturel. Mais l'acte d'expression constitue un monde linguistique et un monde culturel, il fait retomber à l'être ce qui tendait au-delà. De là la parole parlée qui jouit des significations disponibles comme d'une fortune acquise. A partir de ces acquisitions, d'autres actes d'expression authentique — ceux de l'écrivain, de l'artiste ou de philosophe — deviennent possibles. Cette ouverture toujours recrée dans la plénitude de l'être est ce qui conditionne la première parole de l'enfant comme celles des concepts. Telle est cette fonction que l'on devine à travers le langage, qui se réitère, s'appuie sur elle-même, ou qui, comme une vague, se rassemble et se reprend pour se projeter au-delà d'elle-même. (*Ibid.*, pp.229-230).

## Dharmakīrti and Abélard Buddhist apoha vāda and Abélardian Conceptualism

In this chapter an attempt is made to present the basic tenets of the Buddhist theory of signification, popularly known as *apoha vāda*, based on the exclusion of the “other”, or on correlative oppositions, of Dharmakīrti, who is supposed to have lived and composed his great treatises in the seventh century CE, and of *Conceptualism* of Pierre Abélard in the beginning of the twelfth century.

Dharmakīrti was born in South India at a place called Trimalaya. He was converted to Buddhism in his early life and wandered from one seat of learning to another in search of right knowledge. He finally arrived at the famous University of Nālandā where he received his first lessons in the theories of Dignāga from Íśvarasena who was a direct pupil of the great master. Dharmakīrti soon surpassed his guru who acknowledged that his pupil had a better understanding of Dignāga’s theories and allowed him to compose his own treatises.

In this presentation, we will follow closely Dharmakīrti’s *Nyāya-bindu* with a commentary by Dharmottara in the eighth century. (Reference, *Nyāya-bindu by Dharmakīrti with a commentary by Dharmottara*, trns. F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Vol II).



There are three basic premises : *perception, inference, syllogism*. We begin with the sense perception of an object and its right knowledge. We have the sense perception of an object which consists in making us feel its presence, and which is followed by the construction of its image, *kalpanā, vikalpa*. In the Mīmāṃsa system, there are three stages in the development of cognition, the first apprehension, *darśanā*, man's purposive action, *pravartana*, and the successful reaching of the object, *prāpana*. For Dharmakīrti the first stage alone is in the domain of cognition. Sense perception is direct perception. Indirect perception is inference that points out to a mark of the object. These are the only two valid methods of cognition which lead to right knowledge. Knowledge is right when it is pointed to an attainable object. An object that is not perceived directly or indirectly, through sense perception or inference, is unreal as water seen as an illusion in a desert. (1-3).

Direct knowledge based on sense perception is non-constructive and non-illusive. It is a cognition which makes us feel the direct presence of the object. Not to be a construction means to be foreign to construction, not to have the nature of an arrangement. Non-illusive means not contradicted by the underlying essence of reality which possesses efficiency. This excludes, for example, the vision of a moving tree observed by someone travelling by ship. It is an illusion. It is not right perception. Neither it is an inference, since it is not derived from some mark in its threefold aspect. (4,6.22).

Construction or judgement implies a distinct cognition of a mental reflex which is capable of coalescing with a verbal designation. When the denoted fact and the word denoting it enter into one act of cognition, then the word and the object are supposed to have coalesced. A distinct cognition of such a denoted reflex is thus considered to be capable of coalescing with a word. Dharmottara argues that an independent cognition is not a reflex restricted to one momentary sensation because the

factors which would correspond to the synthetic image are absent. Such a synthetic image is capable of coalescing with a word. It applies equally to every particular sound. Although the strictly particular sound can be significative, nevertheless the cognition of an object associated with such a verbal expression is a synthetic construction... It is true that the strictly particular sound may have this double character of a sound and a meaning, nevertheless it is really apprehended in this double aspect, not as a present fact, but as something which was experienced at the time of the formation of language when sounds at first received their conventional meanings. (8.14-24)

According to Dharmakīrti, mental sensation follows the first moment of every sense cognition which is thus its immediately preceding homogeneous cause. The latter cooperates with the corresponding movement of the object which immediately follows the proper momentary object of sensation. Dharmottara explains that in order to distinguish this analogous case of correlation between sensation and the following moment of consciousness, the words, immediate and homogeneous, have been inserted. It is homogeneous as a mental content, and it is immediate, since there is no interval between them, and it is a cause, since it is followed by it. Thus it is being expressed that the outer sense and the inner sense represent two succeeding moments, two parts of the same compact series of one stream of thought, and in this sense, mental sensation is a certain variety of direct knowledge. (10.14-16).

In direct perception, the object of cognition is a unique object. It has two aspects, the directly apprehended and the definitely realised. The directly perceived and the distinctly conceived are two different things, says Dharmottara. What is distinctly conceived follows a compact chain of moments cognised in a construction which is based on sensation. In inference we follow the reverse order. The imagined object which

is apprehended by inference is definitely referred to as an imagined particular. There is a coordination between the imagined and the particular. In Abélardian terms, the object of knowledge constituted in the domain of imaginaire must correspond to, without being identical with, the sensible.

As opposed to the unique particular is the universal character. The universal character of something is that essence which refers to generality. It is an essence which belongs equally to an indefinite number of points of reality. The fire in our imagination refers to every possible fire. It represents the universal essence.

The source of cognising consists in the coordination between the constructed image and its real object. (20). Cognition is a fact which is coordinated with a momentary object ; the cognition produced by a patch of blue colour is coordinated with the substratum of this blue. Coordination is described as an idea, as the representation of the object. Indeed, as soon as our awareness begins to present itself as an image of something blue, we judge that we have a distinct cognition of it, this is blue, this is not blue. The senses, indeed, and the object which together produce an indefinite sensation are not equal to the task of determining it as an awareness of the self-conscious image of something blue. But as we become conscious of its similarity with other blue objects and its contrast with everything non-blue, it can be determined as a self-conscious image of what is blue. (15.17). What imparts distinctness to our cognitions is a constructed image. It depends upon the influence of pure sensation, but in itself, it is not a sense perception. Sense perception is passive and non-constructive. As such, it is not capable of delineating its own configuration. Coordination is immanent to the image. Our cognition begins to exist as having a self-conscious image of the blue only when it is definitely shaped in the judgement, this is blue. Sense perception becomes a real source of knowledge only



in combination with a constructed judgement (image) and not in the form of pure sensation. Seeing is the function of direct cognition. Imagining is the function of constructive thought. (16.4.12).

According to Dharmakīrti, there are three aspects of cognition : *negation, identity, causation*. The predicate is either derived or affirmed. There is no jar at a particular place. It is not perceived although the conditions of its perception are fulfilled. An object which is in the condition of cognisability is either visible or which could have been visible. The object is imagined, for if it were present in this place, it could be perceived. The empty space is perceived, the object is imagined, and both the empty space and the absent object are included in the same cognition. The spot from where the jar is absent, and the cognition which is intent upon it, are both the negation of a possible visibility, since they are the real source of negative judgement. When we refer to the negation whose essence is a negation of hypothetical perceptibility, it refers to the presence of the bare spot as well as the fact of its cognition. The presence of all the conditions of cognition, says Dharmakīrti, consists in the presence of an individual entity and the totality of all other conditions of cognition. (14). Negation refers to all deductions of absence and the practical value of negation in life, *abhāva vyavahāra*. The predicate can be positive or negative. Since affirmation and negation are mutually exclusive attitudes, the reasons for them are also different. Affirmation is either different from the fact from which it is deduced or identical with it. Difference and non-difference are mutually opposed to each other by the law of contradiction, they have different justifications. They depend upon how they are deduced from specific facts. According to Dharmakīrti, one thing can convey the existence of another when it is existentially dependent on the latter. When the cause of something is to be deduced synthetically or an essential quality is to be deduced analytically, the effect is in its existence.

Its essence is then dependent upon the fact from which it is deduced. Existential dependence implies that one of them cannot exist without the other. In this relation of interdependence, there is a fact which is dependent and the other which is independent. The existential dependence is a dependence of the logical reason upon a fact corresponding to the predicate. The logical is subordinate and is considered dependent. On the other hand, the fact that corresponds to the predicate is independent. It is the dependent part that possesses the power to convey the existence of the other, says Dharmottara. The independent part, to which the other is subordinated, *pratibandha viśaya*, is the deduced part. (26.2).

In reality, there are only two necessary relations : *identity* and *causation*. Identity with the predicated fact means that the mark represents the predicate itself, its essence. Since the essence of a logical reason is contained in the predicate, it is dependent upon the latter, an invariability of deducing one fact from another always reposes upon a necessary connection between them. Therefore their difference in an analytical deduction concerns exclusively more constructed conceptions which have been superimposed upon the same reality and which are necessarily connected, says Dharmottara. Furthermore, since the possibility of deducing one fact from another is based exclusively upon these two relations of identity and causation, and they, in turn, are founded exclusively upon either the presence of a comprehended attribute or upon the fact that a result must have a cause, their reality or affirmation can be established only on the basis of these two relations. (27.10).

Dharmakīrti asserts that negation is the process through which either the absence of something or some practical application of the idea of an absent thing is deduced. (46). Whether it is a question of a thing that is present or a thing that is absent, it always refers to a thing that could have been present. Our cognition can be based either on

experience that has been or that could have been. In other words, it always implies affirmation or negation of a sensibilia and their compatibility in the domain of construction of images and conceptual wholes. Dharmottara says that the laws of contradiction and causation refer to sensibilia only. Extension and comprehension of our concepts are founded on negation. The non-existence of the terms, tree and *Aśoka*, is fixed when if at a certain place there are no trees, there are no *Aśokas*. The knowledge of the absence of something is produced only by the repudiation of an imagined presence (39.7). Negation is the foundation of our concept of non-existence, says Dharmottara, which underlies our knowledge of the laws of *contradiction*, of *causality* and of *subalternation*. (39.9).

In the third section of *Nyaya-bindu*, Dharmakīrti deals with syllogism. We begin with the method of *Agreement* and the method of *Difference*. When there is a common denominator, the sharing of the attributes, it is called the condition of Agreement. On the other hand, when the attribute differs, when there is a contrast, it is considered the condition of difference. These two conditions correspond to affirmation and negation. As an example of the former, we may state, all products are impermanent, just as a jar. Since the sounds of speech are such products, consequently, they are impermanent. We have here the agreement between the subject of the inference and other similar cases. On the other hand, when there is disagreement, we call that premise, the method of Difference. Example : Eternal realities are known to be products, as space. The sounds of speech are a product. Consequently, they are impermanent. The aim of such a syllogistic argument is to express a logical connection which always has a threefold aspect. For this purpose, both methods are used. In both the cases, it is an affair of contrapositions. We begin with a statement, a position, it is followed by a negation, a contraposition, which leads us to the



domain of signification. Dharmakīrti gives an example of a negative deduction:

Major premise : Wheresoever we do not perceive the presence of a representable thing, we exhibit corresponding behaviour towards it.

Example : Just as when we fail to perceive another thing known from experience to be quite unexisting, though representable, e.g. the horns on the head of a hare.

Minor premise : On a certain place we do not perceive the presence of a jar which is representable.

Conclusion : We behave without expecting to find it there. (9)

We begin with the non-perception of a representable thing and our corresponding behaviour towards it. But when we fail to perceive another thing, which is not only not present, but non-existing (to the same perception), even though, in imagination, it is representable, like the horns on the head of a hare, our reactions are concomitant with this imaginary absence. However, if on a certain place we do not see a jar which is obviously quite representable, we presume its absence or negation accordingly. The logical reason is necessarily associated with its consequence; it is a statement of concomitance. After the negative deduction, there is an example of analytical deduction.

Major premise: Every thing that exists is momentary.

Example: Just as a jar (representing a compact chain of momentary existences).

Minor premise: The sound exists.

Conclusion: It is a chain of momentary existences. (10).

The formula of an analytical syllogism with a middle term which is differentiated by a qualification existentially identical with it may be

stated as follows: Whatsoever has an origination is impermanent; just as a jar. The sounds of our speech possess origination; consequently, the sounds of our speech are impermanent.

All such analytical deductions are deductions of coexistence. The attributes which are given as reasons to deduce the corresponding predicates are conceived as logical reasons to deduce only such predicates, *sādhana dharma*, *sādhya dharma*, whose necessary dependence on nothing but the presence of the reason is established by proofs, *pramāṇa*, corresponding to every specific case. (17). A logical reason does not lead to cognition accidentally, as a lamp accidentally happens to illuminate certain objects. It produces knowledge, by logical necessity, as an ascertained case of invariable concomitance. (47.9). What we call an analytical reason is first the fact that the predicate is a natural outflow of reason, and not a fact outside it, it is contained in the essence of the latter. The underlying reality is the same for both. The logical reason and the logical predicate are indeed the two aspects of the same reality. They are conceptually constructed.

After the method of *Agreement*, we have the method of *Difference* which is based primarily on *Negation*. What exists, all conditions of perceptibility being fulfilled, is necessarily perceived, for example, the particular case of a patch of blue colour. But on this spot, we do not perceive an existing jar although all conditions of perceptions are fulfilled. Consequently, there is here no jar. The proposition expressed that the existence of something perceivable is followed by perception. Existence is the negation of non-condition, we have here a contraposition. The negation of the predicate is made the subject, and the negation of the subject is made the predicate. This proposition establishes that when a deduction is made according to the method of difference, it must be shown that the negation of the deduced consequence necessarily involves the negation of reason (50.10). When a proposition directly expresses



agreement, the positive consistence of reason with its consequence, the contraposition follows virtually by implication. The contraposition is obvious when it is realised that the absence of consequence will also lead to the absence of reason. When we say that the reason is invariably concomitant with its consequence, it is implied that the contraposition holds good, *sāmarthyāt*, *avasita*. Similarly, when the deduction is expressed by the method of difference, the positive concomitance follows by implication. (30).

Finally, we come to the law of *contradiction*, the fundamental law of the Buddhist theory of signification, *apoha vāda*. When one fact has duration, says Dharmakīrti, the sum-total of its causes remains unimpaired, and it then vanishes as soon as an other, the opposed fact, appears, it follows that both are incompatible, just as the sensation of heat and cold. (75-76). This is an opposition of incompatibility, impossibility of contiguous coexistence. It is a proposition of mutual exclusion. There is also opposition between two facts when their own essence consists in mutual exclusion, as between affirmation and negation of the same thing. (77). When one thing is definitely cognised, another is simultaneously excluded, the essence of the distinctly cognised contrasts with the excluded. When a patch of blue is cognised, the non-blue is excluded. Without this exclusion, there can be no cognition of the blue. Existence and non-existence, affirmation and negation are correlative, there is always mutual exclusion, one thing is nothing but the negation of the other. (69-70). This opposition is of two types : direct and indirect. The opposition between blue and non-blue is direct, blue directly negates the non-blue. On the other hand, between blue and yellow is indirect, for even though yellow falls in the domain of non-blue, this negation is indirect.

The law of *contradiction* leads to the law of *identity*. If two facts mutually exclude each other, they are correlative, they cannot be identical.

It is called, essential contradiction, for it serves to establish the essence or the nature of all entities. Negation is founded exclusively on a repelled suggestion. When an object is being definitely circumscribed by cognition, a representable form of its negation is repelled. The two types of opposition have different functions. One precludes their identity as that of heat and cold. The other precludes their contiguous coexistence. The law of contradiction is logical, it covers all objects, real or imagined. The law of incompatibility refers to a limited number of real occurrences only. Even when a fact has never been observed, says Dharmakīrti, its non-existence cannot be deduced from the presence of another fact, if the latter has not been established by experience as incompatible with it. (79).

Finally, Dharmakīrti says that a real, absolute, contradiction is impossible in the domain of necessary succession, necessary in existence and negation. The analytical reasoning requires a logical connection. Causality requires a necessary dependence. An analytical reason is contained under the fact which is deduced from it. For a real contradiction, the effect should exist without its own cause, and a property must exist somewhere beyond the concept under which it is contained. All our thinking, or all synthesis of thinking, consists either in the affirmation of succession or of co-inherent attributes, or in the affirmation of absence of something on a bare place. There is no other general principle than these three, they control the entire domain of thought. (81.7). Dharmakīrti sums up the discussion by stating that the essence of the logical reason is defined as assisting in its presence only in similar cases, and its absence in every dissimilar case. Furthermore, the causal reason represents an effect from which the existence of a cause is inferred. The analytical reason represents a necessarily coexisting attribute which alone is sufficient for deducing the consequence. The causal deduction necessarily follows from the existence of the effect

and the analytically deduced property is necessarily inherent in the fact representing the analytical reason.

Before we move on to Abélardian *Conceptualism*, we may note the salient features of Dharmakīrti's theory of signification. To begin with, our sense perception apprehends the unique particular thing which exists only in point-instants, it is always in flux. The sense perception of these particulars functions as a stimulant for the intellect to constitute their images for conceptual constructions. Words of our language represent these conceptual constructs. They are due to human mental activity which is presented in the form of logical inferences derived by a complex process of inference and syllogistic reasoning. Sense perception is direct, it deals with an empirical reality within very short space at point-instants, hereafter, all reasoning is indirect, logical and conceptual. It is based on the three principles of negation, identity and causation. Identity and causation are deduced principles which operate under the general cover of Negation, as in Buddhist terms, Negation is the basis of all thought, all understanding, but this Negation is not at all the Hegelian idealist negation, it is well grounded in the basic and fundamental notion of the reality of the presence of the particular in the empirical point-instants. It is deduced from the principles of Affirmation and Difference, of Similarities and Dissimilarities, of Existential Interdependence of correlative facts. To quote again Dharmakīrti: Negation is the process through which either the absence of something or some practical application of the idea of an absent thing is deduced. Whether the facts be denied by way of an affirmation of something incompatible with them or through the negation of their causes etc., everywhere Negation, on analysis, refers to the possibilities of sensation (46).

For Abélard also, all human knowledge is derived from our sensuous experiences. These experiences stimulate us to reflect upon the state



of insensible things as if they were sensible things : *Quippe, ut longe suprameminimus, tota humana notitia a sensibus surgit. Ac per hoc, insensibilium rerum status ad modum sensibilium excogitare, ipsa nos sensuum experimenta compellunt.* (Tractatus, 77). In the process of comprehension, there is a movement from sensations to intellection. We cannot create anything just on the basis of intellection, says Abélard, unless we have had experience of things which resemble the corporeal realities. There are in fact three steps in the cognition of signification : *sensus, imaginatio, intellectus*. To begin with, we have a sensuous experience of a thing, it is followed by imagination and intellection. Intellection is different from imagination, for imagination, like sensation, operates only on the things of which we have had sensuous experience. Imagination, in fact, is nothing but a souvenir of a sensation. However, imagination leads to a confused perception because it is a mere sensation and it is not subjected to reason. Intellection operates on the essence or the nature of things, which are incorporeal, abstract, which cannot be perceived by our senses, and which present only confused images in the domain of imaginaire. It is through intellection that we arrive at the comprehension of the nature of man, its being a rational, mortal animal. All these natures are abstract and incorporeal. We begin to perceive these abstract images in the domain of imaginaire, and as we apply our intellection, we have a distinct conception of these characteristics. All human beings follow these three steps of the comprehension of the significations of the universe. Only God has the capacity to bypass the first two steps of sensation and imagination. In the Indian tradition it was admitted that the Yogis, the elevated spirits, can intuitively arrive at distinct comprehension without the corporeal medium.

Like Dharmakīrti's conceptual construct and Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa*, Abélard talks about simple and composed or complex intellections. A

simple intellection is not the one which does not have parts, but the parts do not appear in succession. Whether it is one word or an utterance composed of several words, it can represent one or more intellections, simple or composed. The word, man, presents several intellections, rational, mortal etc. but they do not occur in succession. It is one construct, and as such, it represents a simple intellection. Abélard argues that the grammatical notions of liaison, division and disjunction do not operate when our spirit moves in one and continuous impulsion of intelligence. All divisions, disjunctions and parts become the indivisible part of the whole. In the domain of signification, the unity of the impulsion of intellection is more important than the separation operated by grammatical categories of language : *Vna autem est coniunctio, uel diuisio, siue disiunctio intellectus per quam animus continue, ex uno mentis impulsu, progreditur et una dirigitur intentione, per quam ei quod primum intellectum est aliquid coniungendo uel disiungendo, uel inter ipsum et aliud disiungendo, cursum quodammodo inceptum sine interruptione consummet.* (47).

In the context of division and abstraction, we have the Abélardian theory of *Negation*. The intellections which *divide*, *disjoin* and *abstract* are different from each other, for the intellection that divides, says Abélard, is an intellection of negation, for it separates one thing from an other, as for example, when we say, a man is not a horse, or that, a healthy man is not a sick man. On the other hand, the intellection that disjoins is an intellection of an affirmation. It does not separate one thing from an other. It constitutes one unique intellection of several things that it conceives. The intellections by abstraction are those which represent a form in itself without considering the way it is subjected to it, or reflect on any of its natures *indifferently*, without distinguishing the individuals which characterise it. When we aim at the colour of a body, or the knowledge of a soul in its proper being, a colour, a knowledge

or a quality, or any other such entity, we abstract certain forms mentally without paying attention to the totality of the bodies, they are a part of. When we consider the human nature, which belongs to individual men, without paying attention to the distinction between one man and another, such as mortal, rational, animal, we abstract universals from the indivisible subject. In both cases, we comprehend separately the things which are in fact united and which cannot subsist separately, at times, aiming at the matter alone, at others, aiming only at the form, in isolation. Consequently, when we aim at any thing with regard only to some of its natures or properties, we perceive it in a manner other than the way it really is. In fact, as no nature subsists purely anywhere, it is never purely conceived. Wherever it is, it always possesses several natures or properties which are not all aimed at, at the same time. There is no nature that subsists indifferently. The corporeal substance in this body is nothing other than the body itself. The human nature in this man, in Socrates, is nothing other than Socrates himself. It is the same thing *essentially*. There are innumerable modes of intelligence of any thing which are not its modes of existence :

*Multi namque et innumerabiles modi sunt intelligentie cuiuslibet rei, qui non sunt existentie ipsius, sicut ex suprapositis liquet. (82).*

To signify is to constitute an intellection, says Abélard, however, to signify something is not the same thing as to constitute its intellection. Consequently, when we apprehend a man or when we have a thought where we conceive of a human nature, it is not necessary that our object is this or that man, but several men and innumerable thoughts where the human nature is reflected upon. We have this reflection, indistinctly, without any certitude of any person.

We now follow Abélard's discussion about the problem of universals, the fundamental problematic of the Middle Ages, in his *Logica*. As the



universals are neither the things individually nor collectively, there is only one solution, says Abélard, this universality can be attributed only to the words. The grammarians classify the words as appellative and proper, and the dialecticians classify them as universals and particulars. The universal word is a word that by definition can be attributed to a plurality of beings, as for example, the word, man. The singular word, on the contrary, can be attributed only to one man. This formulation suggests not only the simple terms in opposition to multiple expressions, but it also implies the unity of signification to the exclusion of all other equivocal terms.

The point of view of the grammarian is different from that of the dialectician. For example, in a phrase, man is a stone, we construct absolutely correct form from the point of view of the grammarian, from the point of view of pure enunciation. However, from the point of view of the dialectician, this phrase is incompatible, incorrect. If these universals have raised so many problems, it is due to the fact that they do not possess any substantial reality, and they do not represent an intellection of any thing that is real. They do not seem to designate anything real, for everything that exists, exists separately, and they do not meet, *rencontre*, in any real thing, that could have justified the universal terms. The universals, argues Abélard, signify in a certain manner, the diverse realities that they designate, their intellections are not due to the realities themselves, but they are applicable to each of them. The word, man, that designates each man by virtue of the common reason that they are all men, creates thus a certain common intellection that is applied to each of them within which our comprehension conceives a common similitude.

Senses and intellection both belong to the soul, says Abélard, but they are different from each other, for the senses can operate only by means of corporeal instruments, they perceive only the bodies or that



belongs to the bodies. It is thus that we see a tower and the visible qualities of the tower. The intellection, on the other hand, does not need a corporeal medium. All it requires is the *similitude* of the object that the spirit itself fabricates and directs the intellectual activity. When the tower is destroyed, the sensible vision disappears, its intellection, however stays as long as the soul conserves the similitude of the object. At the same time, as the senses are not confused with the object experienced, intellection is not that form of the object that it conceives, it is rather a spiritual activity, and the form that orients its activity is an imaginary and fictive reality that the spirit fabricates when it wants, and how it wants, like the imaginary cities that one sees in a dream or that from of a building to be constructed that the artisan conceives in advance as a model of the object which is supposed to be given a definite form. All these realities have neither the substance nor the accidents.

Abélard says that some confuse this imaginary reality with the operation of comprehension. For them, this monumental image in the absence of the tower is the intellection of the tower. This seems to be the opinion of Aristotle. Abélard argues that this image is the similitude of the thing. Our comprehension cannot be confused with this similitude. Separated from the body, the square form or the real height of the tower cannot become, even with a fictive qualification, the form of the comprehension or intellection, or of any other essence. It is an affair of a fictive quality, the substance also is fictive to which belong this form and this height. It is the same with the image of the mirror that appears as a thing to the vision but which does not really exist, for often it happens that on the surface of a white mirror qualitatively contrary colours appear.

We come now to the operation of *abstraction*. Matter and form never exists in isolation from each other but our spirit has the capacity to consider at times matter in itself, and at others, the form alone, and

even at others, in their union. In the first two cases, it is an affair of abstraction where we abstract an element from the whole to consider it separately. In the third case, we deal with *synthesis*. When we consider this man as a substance or as a body, neglecting the fact that he is animal, man or grammarian, our intellection is not based on any quality that does not belong to him. It only ignores some of them. And when we say that our attention is focused on this being only inasmuch as he has this quality, the restriction concerns our attention, and not at all, the manner of the existence of this being. We do not in fact state that this reality possesses only this quality, but we consider it only inasmuch as it possesses this quality. We consider it intellectually, in a way other it is in reality. Our intellection considers a quality, not as separated, but as separately. Even our senses consider some realities in this manner, for example, in a statue of half gold and half silver, at times we pay attention to gold, at others, to silver.

From the universal qualities we move on to the significance of words. Abélard argues that even though the definition of the universals, genres or species, is based on the words, it is often extended to the real things which correspond to these words. This is the case, for example, when we say that the species is composed of the genre and the difference, which signifies that the specific reality is constituted with the generic reality. When we deal with the natural signification of words, at times, we refer to words themselves, at others, to things, and the confusion is quite frequent in this domain.

In his *Commentaries*, Boethius has brought a confusion, argues Abélard, in this domain of the universals. He seems to have given incorrect definitions of genres and species. He believes that the genres and species do not correspond to any word which could signify the real things or help us understand them. Everything that is unique is numerically one, separated in its proper essence, but as the genres and species are

necessarily common to a plurality, they cannot be numerically singular, nor numerically unique. One can respond to this statement by saying that they are numerically singular in the sense that they are common. Boethius rejects this solution and asserts that all that is numerically singular can be common in three ways : either it possesses common parts, or stays totally common in the succession of times, or finally, stays totally common in a given time. Abélard argues that these three propositions are not valid, for their community is of the fourth type. They are simultaneously, entirely present in each of the singular and constitute the substance of these singulars. The universal sounds do not participate partially in the diverse realities they denominate, they constitute each of these realities simultaneously, totally and entirely. We can also say that they constitute the very substances of the realities they are common to, or by transfer, they signify the realities which constitute other realities, as the word, *animal*, denotes in man or in horse, what is their matter, and at the same time, that of other beings lower than man. They constitute the substance of things in the sense that they define them in a certain manner, and this is why they are called, *substantial*, for the word, *man*, for example, denotes all that is animal, rational and mortal. It is the plurality of the real things, which is the basis of the universal character of the word, for there is no universal which does not have a plurality. *The universality that the thing confers on the word, in itself the thing does not possess it*, asserts Abélard. *It is not the thing that bestows on the word, its signification, and one considers a noun as appellative following the plurality of the things it designates even though these things themselves do not have this signification, and are not appellative*. This is one of the most important statements that Abélard ever made. There is an inevitable relation between the thing, *chose*, and the word, *mot*, but this relation is highly complex. The word is a signifier that derives its significance from the thing it corresponds to, but asserts Abélard, there is a differentiation, a gap, an



*écart*, the significance that the thing ends up charging the word with, the thing itself does not possess. The significative intention of the signifier, in a way, transcends the significance it began with. There is a certain development, evolution in the very act of signifying. From the concrete reality of the thing, we move on to the abstract characteristic of the word. This is why Abélard makes a distinction between the word as a physical being, as a sound, as a *vox*, and the word as an enunciation, as an *énoncé*, as a signifier, as a *sermo*.

To conclude this section, we would like to present briefly the propositions of Professor Jean Jolivet. Signification involves a rapport between two things, or what may be called the association of ideas, the man we see makes us think of another (Jolivet, 1994. p.68-82). Above all, this implies a rapport between a sign, a word, and a thing. According to Abélard, to signify is to generate an idea or an intellection. This is the principal significative function. However, if the words generate, in the mind of the listener, the intellection, they basically concern the things, the signification traverses the mental layer to go beyond the image to arrive at the intellectual understanding. There is thus a double correspondence, of the ideas with the things, and of the words with the ideas. In other words, the word leads to the idea, the idea to the thing. Furthermore, the words are supposed to imitate things, in their elementary construction and in the very form of the nouns. All the same, Abélard does not think that etymology exhausts the significance. In going to the origin of the word, one apprehends the etymological aspect of the thing, but there are other aspects. Etymology enlightens us about the composition of the noun and not about the substance of the thing. A name was given to a thing, for this was considered to have this quality. It was due to a certain imposition, a certain convention. This is how Abélard interprets the ten categories of Aristotle. They are relative, we can always envisage the characteristics of man other than what we have perceived until now.

Apart from isolated words, there are propositions. What a proposition signifies is real but it is not a thing. It may at best be called a quasi-thing, *quasi res*, but it is nothing, no thing at all. A proposition has a subject and a predicate, and it can be affirmative or negative. The propositions signify the manner in which the things are related with each other.

For Abélard, the image is nothing, *néant*, the universal is a word, and the subjects which accord with the same predicate meet in *esse* which is not a thing, for example in the being of man, *être-homme*. It is the rapport between the theory of the predicate and that of the signification of the proposition that is emphasized here.

For the existence of logic, it is necessary that the words must first signify the ideas, and not the things. The distinction between the noun and the verb is its proof. Furthermore, to say that the word signifies is to say that it manifests the intellection of the one who pronounces it, or it generates, for the one who listens, a similar intellection. To signify, then, is to constitute an intellection, and in the *Dialectica*, Abélard distinguishes between the sounds which signify by nature, as the barking of the dogs, and those which signify by convention. It implies that there is signification as soon as an intellection is generated by a sign even if that sound is emitted without the intention of signifying anything. But if we remain within the domain of language, it is obvious that its function is that of the middle terms between two thinking beings. Abélard thus considers logic preoccupied by the enunciative propositions, and finds its object only at the level of language and not at that of the impressions, or at that of the things. This leaves aside all that is foreign to intellect. The sphere of ideas is separated from the sphere of language. But these separations do not exclude their specific rapport. Words signify intellections but they are based on things. One can also say that the things are also signified by the words, for they are



presented by them : *nam et res et intellectus per voces quodammodo proferri dicuntur id est significari*. Thus apart from the theory of signification there is the theory of the correspondence between the ideas and the things. Words engender intellection, and thereby they lead us to the understanding of things.

As we follow the ideas of Dharmakīrti and Abélard, we find several similarities. Both begin from the sensuous experience and constitute corresponding images of things. The Buddhist emphasis on the reality of the unique particular in its being, of point-instants, is not found in Abélard but as the process of intellection begins, the particular and the universal find approximately the same space. Abélardian intellections correspond to Dharmakīrti's conceptual constructs. In Dharmakīrti, Negation plays the central role in the general exposition of the theory of signification. With logical processes of identity and causation, methods of agreement and difference, existential interdependence of correlative facts, the Buddhist framework of logical exclusions is circumscribed. Abélard concentrates on different forms of intellection, and in the general problematics of the universals, constitutes a theory of signification with several similarities with the Buddhist counterpart without ever being identical with it. As we follow the two ideologies in detail, there are preoccupations specific to each system of thought, to each theoretical space; Dharmakīrti's *apoha vāda* is not Abélardian *conceptualism*, but the striking similarities can also not be ignored.

## REFERENCES

### DHARMAKĪRTI-DHARMOTTARA IN *NYĀYA-BINDU*

1. Construction of judgement implies a distinct cognition of a mental reflex, which is capable of coalescing with a verbal designation. (from *Nyāya-bindu* by Dharmakīrti with a commentary by Dharmottara, trans. F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Vol. II, Delhi reprint, 1984, 5).

2. It is true that the strictly particular sound may have this double character of a sound and a meaning, and that meaning involves synthesis, nevertheless it is really apprehended in this double aspect not as a present fact, but as something which was experienced at the time of the formation of language, when sounds at first received their conventional meaning. (8.23).
3. What we call negation is not absence of knowledge, but a positive reality, and an assertory cognition of it. The simple unqualified absence of cognition, since it itself contains no assertion at all, can convey no knowledge. But we speak of negation whose essence is a negation of hypothetical perceptibility, these words may be regarded as necessarily implying a bare place where there is no jar and the cognition of that same place. Negation means the presence of a bare spot as well as the fact of its cognition. (20).
4. Identity is a means for deducing a property when the subject alone is by itself sufficient for that deduction. (16).
5. A predicate whose presence is dependent on the mere existence of the reason, and is dependent upon no other condition besides the mere existence of the fact of constituting the reason, such is the predicate which is inseparable from the reason and can be analytically deduced. When such a predicate is deduced, the reason represents the same fact of existence as the predicate, it is not different, it is identical. (23.19-20).
6. Cognition is either affirmation or negation, and affirmation is double, as founded either on identity or on causation... One thing can convey the existence of another one when it is existentially dependent on the latter. (19-20). ...Therefore if two facts are existentially connected, we can assert that one of them cannot exist independently from the other, and therefore from the presence of the one follows the presence of the other. (25.20).
7. As regards ultimate reality, the entity underlying the logical reason is either just the same as the entity underlying the predicate, or it is causally derived from it. (23). ...In reality there are only two necessary relations, Identity and Causation. Identity with the predicated fact means that the mark represents the predicate itself, its essence. Since in those cases the essence of a logical

reason is contained in the predicate, therefore it is dependent upon the latter and invariably concomitant with it. (26.12).

8. The success of negative behaviour is only owing to a negative cognition of the form. (26)...The success of negative behaviour reposes exclusively upon such a process of repudiating in thought the imagined presence of an object. (27.14).
9. When entities do not conform to the condition of cognisability, when they are inaccessible in space and time and invisible by nature, since all human experience is then excluded, apodictic negative judgements are not possible. (28). ...Since human experience in respect of metaphysical objects which do not satisfy to the condition of possible experience is excluded, and there can be no apodictic knowledge of their non-existence, therefore, even supposing that such objects really exist, only a metaphysical negation regarding them is possible, a negation whose essence is to be beyond human experience... Negative behaviour is successful when a present or a past negative experience of an observer has happened, provided the memory of this fact has not been obliterated. (28-29). ...Therefore what we call negative experience is this object, the substratum itself appearing as part of the same cognition, and the cognition of such a substratum. Because on the basis of this perceived substratum and of its cognition we arrive at the judgement on the absence of an object which is being imagined as perceived in all normal conditions of a possible experience. (28.20).
10. Negation is the process through which either the absence of something or some practical application of the idea of an absent thing is deduced. Whether the facts be denied by way of an affirmation of something incompatible with them or through the negation of their causes etc., everywhere negation, on analysis, refers to possibilities of sensation. (46). ...Negation is the foundation of our concept of non-existence which is underlying our knowledge of the laws of contradiction, of causality and of subalternation. If we do not have in our memory some negative experience, we will not remember contradiction and other relations, and then, in that case, the non-existence of a fact would



not follow from the affirmation of an incompatible fact or from the negation of its cause. (39.8-10).

11. When there is an agreement, produced by the common possession of the logical reason (middle term), between the subject of the conclusion and the similar cases from which the positive form of the general proposition is drawn by induction, we call it, Agreement. But when there is a contrast, produced by the logical mark, between the subject and the example, i.e. when the examples are negative, we call it the method of Difference. (42.14).
12. It follows therefore that if the concerned absence of the two terms is expressed, their interdependence must reveal itself. Therefore the contraposed general proposition always contains an indication of their interdependence. This indication is nothing but the general proposition in its positive form. Thus it is that one single general proposition, either directly or in its contraposed form, declares that the logical mark is present in similar and absent in dissimilar cases. Therefore it is not indispensable to express both these propositions. (34). ...When two parts are essentially interdependent, the absence of the one conveys the absence of the other. If the reason is dependent upon its consequence, then it will necessarily be absent wheresoever the consequence is absent. (52.13-14).
13. When one fact has duration as long as the sum total of its causes remains unimpaired, and it then vanishes as soon as another, the opposed fact appears, it follows that both are incompatible or efficiently opposed, just as the sensation of heat and cold. (75-76). ...Further a thing which is merely "other" than blue cannot avoid being included in the negation of blue. When we perceive a yellow or some other colour (that is not blue), we do not perceive any blue. We can imagine its presence, and on the ground of a repelled suggestion, we ascertain its absence in a negative judgement, because as the blue excludes its own negation, so also does the yellow and any other colour exclude the negation of its own self. Thus it is that there is a direct contradiction between affirmation and negation, between blue and non-blue, and only an indirect contradiction between blue and yellow, i.e. between

affirmation of any pair of different objects, inasmuch as they unavoidably include the negation of the other. (70.3-5).

14. The essence of a logical reason, in general, has been defined by us as consisting in its presence only in similar cases, and its absence from every dissimilar case. Further, we have specified that the causal and the analytical reason must be shown to represent, the first an effect from which the existence of a cause is inferred, the second, a necessarily coexisting attribute which alone is sufficient for deducing the consequence. When the reasons are so represented, it is then shown that 1) wherever smoke exists, fire exists, like in a kitchen; if there is no fire, neither is there smoke, like in contrary cases; 2) wherever there is production, there is change, like in a jar; if something is changeless, it is not a product, like space. It is, indeed, impossible otherwise to show the existence of the reason in similar and its absence from all contrary cases with the qualification that we have introduced, 1) the causal deduction of the existence of a reason necessarily follows from the existence of the effect, 2) the analytically deduced property is necessarily inherent in the fact representing the analytical reason. (123).

#### ABÉLARD

1. The signification of things is different from that of the words, *voces*. The letters represent sounds as a statue, its model. They signify by resemblance. Finally, there is the suggestive signification of the signs. These three types of signification depend upon convention, *institutio*, but the things, independent of all convention, can signify due to habit, *consuetudo* or due to rapport, *habitus*...*Super Peri ermenias*, edited by B.Geyer, Münster, 1919, 335,33-37.

(General reference : Jean Jolivet, *Arts du langage et théologie chez Abélard*, Paris, 1982.)

2. The words are the symbols of the words emitted by voice, they are the immediate signs of the state of our mind, which in turn are the images of things. Words signify first of all our intellections and only secondarily the things,...*Peri ermenias*, Victor Cousin, *Ouvrages inédits d'Abélard*, Paris, 1836, 1,16,a,2.



3. To signify is to constitute an intellection...*Super Porphyrium*, edited by B. Geyer, Münster, 1919, 36,31-32.
4. Words signify intellections but they are based on things. We can also say that the things are signified by the words, for they are represented by them - *nam et res et intellectus per voces quodammodo proferi dicuntur, idest significari*... words are meant to signify intellections, these intellections that they generate are analogous to what they express... It presupposes, other than a theory of signification, a theory of the correspondence between ideas and things... *Super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, edited by B. Geyer, Münster, 1919, 179,B-9.
5. If a word signifies, it is because something is added to its physical being, *essentia*. This something is its significative function, *officium significandi*... The sound, just like the things it represents in a given language remains the same from one community to another, it belongs to the sphere of things, which is natural ; the significance, on the other hand, is lost due to the diversity of languages. It depends upon an institution, a human convention, *positio hominum, voluntas hominum*... *Sup. Per.*, 320,12-27.
6. It is a matter of transferring the rapport of matter and form from the sphere of things to that of language. When we say that genre is a matter, it is matter in the domain of words, not in that of things... The decomposition of the universal, man, in matter (animal) and in form (rational) has nothing in common with the analysis that would separate, even only in thought, the distinct realities... A genre is a word to which we join other words to constitute expressions to designate species... In that case, we may talk of a resemblance, *similitudo*, between man as a species and of the composition of matter and form as analogy, *proportio* or as resemblance of rapports, *similitudio habitudinum*... *Sup Porph II*, 79,13-30.
7. We must distinguish between the order of intellection and the order of existence... *Sup Praed* 142.20.
8. The function of words is to signify. It is their *raison d'être* and a logician who deals with language deals with significations. But the words have their own

proper nature. Logic, therefore, must correlate the study of signification with the study of signifiers, not only inasmuch as they are signifiers, but also as they are submitted to regulations which are not those of things signified. The correspondence of language with the real is global. Logic does not bypass it but it must take care of all the aspects, of things and words ; hence, the integration of grammar with logic which also gives rise to what is called, the speculative grammar...*Sup Praed* 223,29.

9. Nouns and verbs have double signification, of things and of intellections, for they signify things in instituting intellections, orienting towards a nature or a property of the thing. However, the principal signification is that of intellection, *intellectus*. The world of things is accompanied by the world of intellections which enables us to comprehend it. This mental world enlarges the real in the sense where each intellection has for its object a nature or a property present in the thing. On the other hand, it goes beyond it, for a word or an expression can also generate intellection of what does not exist or what does not exist any more. It all depends upon the mode of conceiving the objects, *modus concipiendi*. The study of the propositions shows us that the real may present aspects which are irreducible to things, to the state of things, which are expressed by the so-called *dicta propositionum* which can neither be assimilated to things nor to intellections...*Sup Per* 366,13.
10. Universality should neither be attributed to things nor to *voces* but to *sermones*. The *sermo*, the name, is instituted by man, while *vox* is the creation of nature. In its being, *in essentia*, it is identical with *sermo*, but this identity is of the order of a stone and a statue. One can attribute it to the latter without attributing it to the former, which as a thing is necessarily individual... Universal is a human creation...*Sup Proph* III, 518,9.
11. To say that the words are of human origin is to insist on their non-substantial character, it is also to emphasize the fact that neither genres nor species are things. This derealisation of the universal is essential to the doctrine of Abélard. But it must also be noted that expelled from the domain of things, it is not reduced to arbitrariness. It is the sign of a nature, of a *status*. By defining the universal as a word (*vox* or *sermo*), Abélard plays a double

role in philosophy. On the one hand, by the derealisation of genres and species, reducing them to the signs of natural states, he opens a line of enquiry in the direction of the study of signification and abstraction, on the other, he emphasizes the formalisation of logic and raises questions of language around the problems of meta-language...*Sup Proph* 11,27-35.

12. Furthermore it is obvious that intellection is different from imagination, for imagination, like sensation, does not deliberate on the basis of reason; but for the things that we have perceived by the senses, imagination is nothing but a certain souvenir of the sensation, as for example, in the absence of the thing that we perceive, the spirit, in a certain manner, retains for itself, a souvenir, the state of the sensation, as it was earlier, even now not deliberating anything by means of imagination on the basis of reason, not any more than it did earlier, by means of sensation. I have added, *by means of imagination*, because when imagination and intellection inhabit together, at the same time, the same soul – as do frequently sensation and intellection – we cannot deny that a certain deliberation is established, by means of intellection; but not by imagination. (*Tractatus de intellectibus* 12)
13. This is why imagination is a confused perception of the soul, a perception deprived of the sensation of the thing that we imagine; we call it, confused, for it does not deliberate on the basis of reason, not any more than sensation. Often, in fact, we perceive through senses what we do not at all through the act of intellection. Even though sensation may be oriented towards the things which are produced outside the spirit, all the same, with the help of intellection, it is directed towards other things. For example, when the study or the meditation of a subject occupies our spirit, the effort of our intelligence is directed towards this subject, not towards the one that we see or perceive in a certain manner to be present. In other words, we never stop our efforts to comprehend the earth or the sky that we observe continuously. (*Tractatus de intellectibus* 13)
14. Consequently, there can be imagination only of a thing that is absent, whose presence is not met by sensation; there can be sensation only of a thing that is present. As to the intellection, it can exercise on a thing that is present



as well as on a thing that is absent ; and it may be noted that wherever we find sensation, we can also have imagination. For even the beasts, in the absence of the things they have perceived, retain their image, as is attested by Boethius, as if they are still attached to the things they had perceived due to the souvenir they retain from their imagination, as they earlier did due to sensation. They retain this image, that their sensation has left, for a short or a long time, according to their capacity. We may also note that some believe that all imaginations are, as we stated earlier, the souvenirs of sensations. Aristotle, however, says, as reported by Boethius in his commentary on *Perihermeneias* that without image we cannot have intellections.

*(Tractatus de intellectibus 16)*

JEAN JOLIVET

1. Commençons par la théorie des universaux, puisque c'est par là que nous avons terminé notre rapide traversée de la doctrine d'Ockham; et puisque c'est en ce point qu'Abélard et lui se rencontrent, au moins pour une part, dans le nominalisme. Les *Gloses de Milan* définissent l'universel comme un nom: "il ne reste plus qu'à attribuer aux seuls noms l'universalité". Cette phrase seule suffirait à montrer qu'Abélard développe au sein du langage même ses problèmes et ses solutions—même si une certaine ontologie intervient pour lui faire nier qu'une chose puisse être en une autre. Les mêmes gloses expliquent ce point de vue sur l'universel en comparant les universaux du dialecticien aux *nomina appellativa* du grammarien; puis, la *constructio* (chose grammaticale) à la *praeedicatio* (chose dialectique), tout cela revient à prendre le langage dans sa consistance propre, bien loin d'en faire un simple instrument, arbitraire et commode, de l'intellect. Et ce nom qu'est l'universel a une double fonction: d'une part, il signifie en les nommant des choses diverses; d'autre part il constitue une intellection commune qui s'y rapporte. *Voilà déjà une thèse qui ne peut s'accorder avec celles d'Ockham: on ne peut dire à la fois, avec ce dernier, que l'idée signifie, et, avec Abélard, que signifier c'est engendrer une idée; les théories correspondantes de l'intellection, ou du concept, devront également différer.*

En effet, quand Abélard parle des rapports de *l'intellectus* à la *res*, il ne dit pas qu'il la signifie. Il dit que l'intellection est une action de l'âme, qui concerne les choses (*pertinet ad res*), qui conçoit une chose (*concipit rem*), le tient (*tenet*), la considère, la perçoit (*considerat, percipit*); qui se tourne vers une forme (*in formam dirigitur*). Mais ce sont les noms qui signifient les choses. D'autre part, la *Dialectica* propose une liste, assez mal organisée d'ailleurs, de façons de signifier; il y est beaucoup question des mots, quelque peu des choses qui signifient (comme les lettres, les statues), mais pas des idées (sauf pour dire que signifier, c'est engendrer une idée). *Il est donc clair que pour Abélard les intellections ne sauraient être des signes, et cela confirme, très logiquement, que sa pensée diffère profondément de celle des nominalistes du 14<sup>e</sup> siècle.* (from Jean Jolivet, *Comparaison des théories chez Abélard et chez les nominalistes du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, Aspects de la pensée médiévale: Abélard, doctrines du langage*, p. 117-118).

2. Dès le début de son commentaire du passage de Porphyre relatif à la nature des universaux, Abélard met en place cette thèse. On se rappelle qu'il ajoute trois questions à celle que pose son auteur: elles concernent d'abord "la cause de l'imposition des noms universels", deuxièmement l'intellection correspondant à ces noms, troisièmement le sort des universaux quand ils n'ont plus rien à nommer. Ces questions ont évidemment un intérêt ontologique, et cela est même explicite dans le texte; toutefois Abélard y mentionne la connexion, effective ou problématique, entre l'universel et le *res*: les noms universels impliquent que des choses diverses "se rencontrent"; aucune chose ne semble être conçue (*concipi*) par le moyen des universaux, mais bien dénotée (*agi*) par eux; on ne sait donc ce qu'il en est de l'universel quand les choses n'existent plus. La question de la signification est donc chez Abélard un véritable carrefour au centre de la doctrine, à partir d'elle nous voyons se situer les uns par rapport aux autres tous les problèmes de psychologie, de métaphysique, de théologie des Idées, que nous avons rencontrés jusqu'ici chez lui. Du même mouvement qu'il distingue, comme nous l'avons vu, signification de choses et signification d'intellections, il situe des noms en face de ce à quoi ils s'appliquent et des structures naturelles qui légitiment cette application, mais cette double relation implique que les



noms aient une manière d'être qui leur soit propre. Il est évident qu'ils ne sont pas ce qu'ils signifient : choses ou intellections. Plus précisément encore, si l'on suit Abélard dans le détail de sa doctrine, il faut dire que les noms permettent de concevoir, ou en d'autres termes qu'ils signifient, les "formes communes" que sont les *status* génériques et spécifiques, et qui sont distinctes des intellections que l'homme peut s'en former. La sphère des noms y gagne encore en consistance: Abélard peut donc affirmer que, de ce fait, "à côté de la chose et de l'intellection surgit en tiers la signification des noms"; et il ajoute: "l'autorité ne le dit pas, mais cela n'est pas opposé à la raison". (from Jean Jolivet, Abélard et Guillaume d'Ockham, lecteurs de Porphyre, *Aspects de la pensée médiévale: Abélard, doctrines du langage*, pp. 250-251).

3. La différence immédiatement perceptible entre les deux philosophes tient à ce que le second dispose du concept de *suppositio*, inconnu du premier; mais cela même exprime, par mode de dépendance réciproque, la différence de leurs points de vue sur la topographie du champ où s'applique leur analyse : pour Abélard, il y a les choses, les idées, le sens des noms ; l'étude des relations entre ces trois domaines conduit à poser des structures essentielles qui sont les *status*, œuvres de Dieu, plus ou moins confusément conçus par l'homme, et signifiés par les mots aussi bien que le sont les choses, mais différemment. Pour Ockham il y a les choses et les signes (concepts et mots) ; chaque chose est indivise et distincte des autres, absolument; c'est pourquoi les universaux signifient les choses en tant qu'ils en sont les signes, et de ce fait les représentent dans les propositions où ils sont employés ; cette fonction de représentation, passant ainsi au premier plan, se substitue à une fonction de signification qui postulerait une homologie entre la structure du langage et celle du réel. (*Ibid.*, 255-256)

## Buddhist Theory of Names and Condillac-Destutt de Tracy

For the sixth century Buddhist philosopher, Dignāga, all Names are negative and dialectical. As all conceptual thought is namable thought, the Names are derived from the Concepts and the Concepts have their source in Names :

vikalpa-yonayaḥ śabdāḥ  
vikalpāḥ śabda-yonayaḥ

Knowledge based on words is negative. Affirmation is based on senses while the intellect is always dialectical. The word, blue, does not communicate the cognition of all blue objects, the number of which is infinite. It does not even communicate the cognition of the universal, blue-ness. However, dialectically, negating the 'non-blue', in a dichotomising process of cognition, it divides the universe into blue and non-blue. The cognition of the object, blue, is thus derived from the conceptual opposition blue/non-blue, and not from any affirmative statement or cognition. As a matter of fact, at the level of sense perception, there is no cognition.

The constitution of a given image presupposes a logical opposition with all other correlative images. It is their negation that bestows on a given image its distinctness. At the first stage, the images are confused

as they correspond fairly closely to the point-instant reality. But when the intellect begins to function, dialectal interaction takes place, and due to the process of conceptual opposition and negation, one arrives at a distinct image, which acquires a definite Name.

Let us begin with Dignāga, the creator of the theory of Names, in his comments on the various Indian theories of signification, namely, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Mimāṃsā. (Reference, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, trns. Masaaki Hatori, Harvard, 1968).

The Naiyāyikas say that cognition which is produced by the contact of sense and object, which is inexpressible, non-erroneous, and of a determinant nature is perception. Dignāga objects to the use of the qualifier, inexpressible, for the object of sense cognition is never what is expressible. What is expressible is necessarily the object of inference, *anumāna*. Similarly, there is no possibility of an erroneous object, for an erroneous cognition has an object, an illusion produced by the mind. (*Pramāṇasamuccaya*, p.36).

For Dignāga, perception, *pratyakṣa*, and inference, *anumāna*, are quite distinct from each other. Perception deals with the particular, *sva-lakṣaṇa*, and the inference, with the universal, *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*. The particular is inexpressible, *avayapadiṣya*, *anirdeṣya* while the universal is derived from a conceptual construction, *kalpanā* which is inseparably related to verbal expression. If the cognition is itself considered as the means of cognition, then it would be contrary to the view held by the followers of the Nyāya theory that the result is different from the means. For the Naiyāyikas, the cognition which is of a determinate nature is a means of cognition. When such a means of cognition operates, it apprehends the object determinately, and therefore there would no result. The qualifier and the qualified are distinct from each other. It is thus unreasonable that a means of cognition should take one thing for its



object, says Dignāga, and the resulting cognition, an other (p.39). At times, even though the qualifier is apprehended, there is no resulting cognition. When we look at a cow in the twilight, we apprehend its universal feature, its qualifier. However, unless we apprehend its particulars, we cannot arrive at the resulting cognition of a cow. Thus, argues Dignāga, it is unreasonable to assume that the cognition of a qualifier is a means of cognition.

There are two necessary conditions for the object of cognition. The object must be the cause of cognition, and it must have the same form as it appears in its cognition. First of all, a cognition must be produced by the object. Secondly, there must be a coordination, *sārūpya*, of form with the object. The first condition is fulfilled only if the object has a real form, for the second, the object must have a gross form, *sthūlākāra*, because a subtle, invisible form is never represented in a cognition. Dignāga rejects the realists' theory of the aggregates. A single atom may be the cause of cognition because it is *paramārtha-sat*, but it has no gross form which corresponds to one that appears in cognition. The aggregate of atoms may acquire a gross form but it cannot be the cause of cognition, for it is *samvṛti-sat*. When the atoms are homogeneous, the form of the object is cognised as the totality of their representations, as in the case of the cognition of the blue. On the other hand, when an aggregate of the heterogeneous atom is taken to be the object, the form that appears in a cognition is a product of *kalpanā*, it is not the sum total of the representation of the atoms.

The Vaiśeṣikas consider the contact of soul and mind to be the means of cognition. This leads to a difficulty. When the means of cognition operate, soul and mind act as the objects of each other. Therefore, it cannot be that the means of cognition pertains to one object, whereas the resulting cognition pertains to another. The Vaiśeṣikas describe perception as dependent on genus and species, *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa*, in the



various instances of perceiving substance, attribute and action. This cannot be, for the cognition produced by the contact of sense and object has no relation to the qualifier of the object since it has for its purpose the mere presentation of the object, *viśayālocanā*. As the sense cognition apprehends merely their respective objects, it is impossible that they are related to the qualifiers of the objects such as genus and the species. For Dignāga, the qualifiers, *sattā*, are constructed by the mind which relates the immediate sense datum to those in the past. The individual existences perceived by the senses are distinct from each other. But when they are contrasted by the mind with non-existence, they are understood as possessing similarity insofar as they are not instances of non-existence. As such, the universals, being attributes, are produced by the mind through the exclusion of non-existence. (p.144).

The main problematic is the role of language in our cognition. Is it a real source of knowledge, a separate source different from the senses and the intellect? For the Buddhists, language is not a separate source of knowledge. Its role is indirect as opposed to the direct source of the senses. The names do not correspond to things but to the images or concepts of things. They express only universals. Names and concepts are indirect, conditional reflexes of reality. They are the echoes of reality. They are logical, not real. The name functions as a middle term through which the object is cognised. All names are negative ; their significance is only dialectical. They derive their being, their signification from a set of juxtapositions of correlative conceptual constructs. Concepts and names cover the same theoretical ground. As such, all conceptual thought is defined as namable thought. According to Dignāga, knowledge derived from words or names does not differ from inference. The name can express its significance only by a set of oppositions. The significance of the names is not derived from the sense perceptions. The senses lead to affirmation. Intellect is dialectical. It is always negative. The word,

blue, does not refer to all blue objects. In any case, they are infinite with infinite shades of the blue. All that the word, blue, denotes is a universe of blue as opposed to that of the non-blue. For Dignāga, verbal knowledge is inferential, relative and dialectical. It does not even signify the universal as defined by the realists for whom the universal is as real as any other sense object because it resides in a real object. As for Dignāga, the universal is only a concept, it can be signified by the words of language, but only if it is conceived as such. For the same reason, Dignāga criticises the Vaiśeṣika theory of "differences" even though superficially it gives the impression that it is similar to the Buddhist theory of Names. In the Vaiśeṣika philosophy, these differences, like the universals, are based on real elements or atoms. That is obviously not acceptable to Dignāga for whom the differences are posited in a dialectical framework and refer only to conceptual correlates which are posited solely for the purpose of constituting conceptual, mutually exclusive universes. The Buddhist universals exist only in our head. They are the products of imagination and intellect.

According to Jinendrabuddhi, we use position and contraposition as two different figures in syllogism, the one is affirmation, the other, negation. The words are expressive of affirmation and repudiation. There is thus only one part of this relation which must be understood as a repudiation of the contrary. The words express only negation, only differences, because a pure affirmation without any empirical negation is senseless, it conveys no definite result. There is no contraposition without a corresponding position, neither is there any position without a contraposition. A position or a positive concomitance is understood as the direct meaning, but it is impossible without at the same time being a negation. Contraposition consists in a repudiation of a foreign meaning from one's own meaning. It is unthinkable that a contraposition should exist without an implied position.

The negative or distinct significance of a word is nothing other than the distinct image of the object it refers to. It is directly evoked by its name. When this significance is communicated, the significance of negation is suggested as implied. The essence of a reflected image of a cow consists in this, it is not the essence of another image, for example, the image of a horse. The simple negation is a subordinate meaning inseparable from every distinct image.

Dignāga has commented on the four Indian traditional schools of thought, the Sāṃkhya, the Mīmāṃsā, the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika. The Sāṃkhya system is the materialist school. It believes in the eternal matter which is eternally in the process of a certain evolution. It is correlated with a soul that is on the contrary motionless. This correlation between the eternally moving and the eternally stationary poses serious problems for the students of philosophy. The adherents of the Mīmāṃsā school had a similar philosophy but instead of the materialism of the Sāṃkhyas, they believed in the eternal sounds of the *Vedas*. They argued that just as light does not produce but only makes manifest the objects upon which it falls, similarly our articulation only makes manifest but does not produce the sounds of the *Veda*. In linguistic terms what was proposed was the absolute *a priorism* of the existing sacred language, the language of the gods, with its absolute purity in sounds and signification, in form and content. This philosophy was derived from the extremely rigid ritualistic tradition, and it led to the development of the sophisticated manuals of language like that of Pāṇini and Patañjali.

The traditional realistic philosophy, including that of Sāṃkhya and Mīmāṃsā, was however best represented by the adherents of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, and it is this school of thought that the Buddhist philosophers, led by Dignāga, were most opposed to.

For the Indian realists, the external world is cognised in its genuine reality. All cognition is from without and it is always operated upon by



our senses. There are no innate ideas. There are no images. The things as well as their characteristics, natures are real and can be cognised by the senses. There is as such no real distinction between the particular and the universal. Both are subject to the same perception. The names or words corresponding to these objects refer to concrete realities. As the language already exists like all other things of this universe, it is an independent source of knowledge. This was vehemently opposed by Dignāga who argued that language is neither an independent source of knowledge nor an *a priori* divine institution. Dignāga founded the theory of Names and argued that Names were imposed on things by our intellectual process of conceptual construction. The Names are veritable concepts which have a correlative coordination with the images of the objects they are the concepts of. The sense perception of the point-instant reality is only a point of departure. It is followed by the constitution of the images and the dichotomising process of the intellect which is always negative and dialectical.

Śāntirakṣita, an eighth century Buddhist thinker, in the line of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, discusses at length the import of Names in his treatise, *Tattvasaṃgraha*. (Reference, trans. Ganga Nath Jha, Baroda, 1937).

He argues that the right meaning of a word consists in the image of the thing and in nothing else since the image appears as identified with the external object in verbal knowledge. The correlation between an object and its verbal designation is causal. When we say that a word denotes, it means that it produces a negation, which is included in the definition of its concept, or the image it produces, which is distinct from all other images, and which distinguishes its object from all other objects. A Name is said to signify because it produces a reflection of the concept of the external thing. It does not refer to the exclusive factor in the shape of a specific individuality. Apart from the said production of re-



flection, there is no other denotative function of the name. It is only when the reflection has been cognised that there follows the exclusion of other things by implication, for the idea of “others” does not form a part of the reflection at all.

In the French tradition, both Abélard and Condillac emphasize that the universals are not only words, but these words or conceptual constructs, or signs of ideas, are essential for any progress in knowledge. In a way, words or names acquire a quasi-independent status.

According to the eighteenth century French philosopher, Condillac, one can reflect upon substances only if one has the corresponding signs which determine the characteristics and properties that one has perceived and wants to unite in complex ideas, just as one unites them outside the objects. The necessity of the signs (names) is even more significant in complex ideas which are composed without any model as the ideas of moral laws. When we gather ideas, which are not found united anywhere else, we formulate ensembles and give them specific names, which hold them together into signifying units. In our daily communication process, these words are used as quasi-independent entities and we begin to reflect upon them as such. Our continuous usage helps us multiply these word-signs. This dialectical interaction, between the process of conceptualisation and the conceptual constructs that the already constituted words represent, is the veritable dynamics of human language.

Let us now consider the Buddhist theory of word-names in detail based primarily on *Tattvasamgraha* of Śāntirakṣita and *Pramāṇasamuccaya* of Dignāga. It will be followed by a similar detailed presentation of the ideas of Condillac and Destutt de Tracy. For Śāntirakṣita, the one uniform, non-different, form that is imposed upon things proceeds on the strength of the apprehension of things in the form of the “exclusion of other things” ; and it being itself of the nature of the

“exclusion or negation of other thing”, it is mistaken by people under the spell of illusion to be one with that which is excluded by it. There is no real basis for these expressions and notions. The only basis for them consists in the seed located in the purely subjective consciousness (869). Whatever is said to be the object of verbal expression is never really cognised. There is no real entity in the shape of the universal which could be the object of verbal cognition.

When the significance of Names consists in an object in regard to which a convention has been duly apprehended, it would consist either in the specific individuality, or in the universal, or in relation to the universal, or finally, in the form of the cognition of the object. These are the only possible alternatives. Śāntirakṣita says that the things of the nature of individuals cannot become interrelated among themselves, because there are differences among them, of place, time, action, potency, manifestation and the rest. For this reason, the thing concerned by convention is never met with in the actual usage, and that is in regard to which no convention has been apprehended can never be comprehended through words, (873-874). It is because of the fact that there are no such real entities as universals which are either different or non-different from individual things. Even if we grant for a moment that there are such things as universals, there would be other problems. As it is possible for several universals to subsist in one individual, there would be a terrible confusion. Until there is a convention, word like “being” cannot be used. There would be incongruity of natural interdependence.

As things are always in flux, there can be no convention in regard to specific individuality of the things nor can it be in regard to the specific individuality of the words. The maker of convention applies a certain name to a particular thing that has been apprehended previously. It is always an affair of memory. The real problem is that the thing ceases to exist and along with it the name is also lost. Another thing is a similar

thing but not the same thing, and hence, the earlier Name is not entirely applicable. It is not right that there should be any connection between the specific individuality and the word nor does the thing appear in the cognition brought about by the word ; just as “taste” does not appear in the cognition of “colour”. (880) When a word is said to be denotative of a certain thing, all that is meant is that it brings about the cognition of that thing, nothing else. A cognition cannot be said to be of that thing whose form does not appear in it at all ; if it did, it would lead to an absurdity. One and the same thing cannot have two forms, one distinct and the other indistinct. There are some who assert that what is denoted by words is an aggregate, free from distributive and collective determination, or an unreal relationship. For instance, the word, *brāhmaṇa*, denotes the aggregate of austerity, caste, learning without any conceptual determination, either collective or distributive, just as the word, forest, denotes, *dhava* and other trees. There are others who hold that what is denoted by the word is a relation of a thing, substance and undefined universal, and this is unreal because the individual correlatives are not really denoted by the word. They are not apprehended together in their own form.

The realist or the upholder of the theory of idea-form being impinged upon things holds that what is denoted by the word has a real existence in the form of the Idea and is impinged upon substance and other things, which are also real, and which therefore along with its object is not false or wrong. He does not admit that the said idea is without real basis, and rests entirely on the imposition of non-difference upon things that are different, and is, on that account, false, they are dependent entirely upon *mutual exclusion* among things as held by the upholders of *apoha*. For the apohist, what is denoted by the words, or the form of the Idea, is not real because the form alone forms the import of the word which appears to be apprehended by the verbal cognition. The



significance of the word is something that is *superimposed*, and what is superimposed is nothing, so in reality, *nothing* is denoted by words.

As the impact of words cannot consist of particulars or universals, there can be no form of the word as coalesced, identified with its denotation. Then again, this coalescence also must reside in the cognition itself, inasmuch as it is different from external relationship.(899). The coalescence must reside in the cognition because the external word and the external object must be distinct, for they are perceived by different sense organs. When the word, having taken up the form of the denoted object, has its verbal character obscured, and appears in cognition, it introduces the objective element into its subjective form, and it is then that it is described as *abhijalpa*, coalescence. This must take place from within the cognition itself, and not at all externally, for what is exterior is by definition of different nature.

The signification of the word is always conceptual. It is only a reflection of the conceptualisation of the external thing. It never refers to its specific individuality. In the process of conceptualisation, there is simultaneous exclusion of the other, and as such, the other or the idea of the other does not form a part of the main concept. The specific thing and what it contains, its nature, its characteristics in the form of the universals are conceptualised in this conceptual operation of *apoha*. In other words, the specific is apprehended but only conceptually. The exclusion or negation is never direct, it is always inferred indirectly. It is always implied. This is the main reason why for some the denotation of the word referring to a specific thing is affirmative. The form of *apoha* is never different from the form of cognition. It is not entirely independent of the object. In fact, the point of departure of all cognition, all conceptualisation, is the sense perception of the point-instant reality of the given object. It is only when the object is being apprehended by its intermediate image that we move from the concrete to the abstract, from



the direct perception to the indirect perception, from the thing to its idea. The exclusion of one cognition is obvious from the fact that the cognition does not bear within itself any factor other than its own form, its own manifestation. This theory of form also leads to the conclusion that as in reality the conceptualised forms in the process of *apoha* are neither the same nor different, we cannot have synonyms or even non-synonymous words. What a Name denotes is a reflection of the object, its conceptual construct. In absolute terms, neither the specific individuality nor its abstraction in a universal can really be denoted by the Names. Exclusions are postulated on the basis of differentiated things. The Names as denoting distinct things refer always to different, distinct things, be they concrete or abstract. As exclusion and correlative negation or opposition differentiates one thing from another, the proper denotation of the Names rules out real synonyms. The Names may denote things which are particular as in a relation of exclusion of mango tree/non mango tree or a universal as in tree/non-tree. Śāntirakṣita states that what differ among themselves are the conceptual contents apprehending the specific exclusions. The differences are due to the influences of their root, the thing as differentiated from other things. And, things consisting of specific individualities do not become either unified or diversified in parts. It is only the conceptual content that varies. (1048-1049).

The notion of negation or exclusion should not be understood literally. It is a correlative concept. When one speaks of the exclusion of the “cow” from the “non-cow”, this exclusion refers only to the difference, to the difference of the cow from other animals, horse etc. Even though this proposition is mentioned in negative form, non, it refers only to the “difference”. This “difference” is not anything different from the different thing. Hence, the terms, “non” and “different” are conceptual, not negative terms. They only establish the identity of each object. When one thing is not of the nature of another, it is called *apoha*. Generally,

this process is considered negative based on the exclusion of the other, but it must be underscored that at any given time, any two objects, specified individualities or abstract universal natures, exclude each other and thereby help us in the cognition of separate entities in a conceptual correlation. This correlation of the "others" is conceptual because it is not at all based on the realities perceived by our sense organs. The validity of this proposition is confirmed when we deal with non-entities, for even the non-entities, the so-called metaphysical objects or ideas, may create impressions and images which can be apprehended in correlative juxtapositions operated upon by *apoha*. The controversy over the reality or the unreality of the ideas is futile, for such entities are neither real nor unreal in the ordinary sense of the term. Their reality is conceptual. The opposition blue/non-blue does not conform to the physical configuration of the blue. It simply dichotomises the universe of colour into two correlative parts. In Buddhist terms, as all reality is in constant flux, there are neither real specific individualities nor specific universals. This is why it is said again and again that what a word or a Name denotes is "nothing", but this nothing refers to sensuous, empirical reality as all denotation is conceptual and dialectical.

While there is no corresponding theory of negation or correlative exclusion in the Buddhist sense in French *conceptualism* from Abélard to Merleau-Ponty, there are striking parallels in the theories of perception in both the traditions. For Abélard, all knowledge was derived from the sensuous experience followed by imagination and intellection. The eighteenth century French philosopher, Condillac also insists on the sensuous experience as the point of departure for all understanding. At the same time, Condillac argues that those who remain at the level of senses only vegetate, the senses are transformed into ideas only when we constitute images of the things we want to apprehend. It is followed by the operations of abstraction and analysis, of going beyond the particular to

the general, the concrete to the abstract. The signs or words correspond to abstract ideas which can be composite or simple but once the words are imposed on these ideas, they cannot be dispensed with. On the other hand, they create serious communicational hazards as different speakers attach different combinations of ideas to the words they use which leads to all kinds of misunderstandings. All the same, the linguistic communication is a dialectical process and without active participation, without praxis, language cannot function. In this perspective, this conceptual dynamicity of Abélard and Condillac is very close to the Buddhist view of language on which Dignāga's theory of the Names is based.

We follow the Condillacian doctrine of cognition and the correlative juxtaposition of signs and ideas in his *Traité de l'art de penser*, 1796. According to Condillac we may rise to the skies or descend in the abyss, we can never go beyond ourselves, we perceive our own thought, and we find in our sensation the origin of all our knowledge and all our faculties. The Original Sin has made our soul completely dependent upon our body. Our reasoning is always based on our sensuous experience.

There are three things to be distinguished in our sensations, the *perception* due to them, the *rapport* that we have with the external object, and the *judgement* that we make thereof. The truth is nothing but a rapport perceived between two ideas. If we say, this tree is taller than the other, the difference is relative. Such judgements are called contingent. There are others which are necessary and eternal, like the idea of a triangle which will eternally represent two right angles.

In the liaison of our ideas, it is our attention and memory which play the most significant role. First of all, it is a matter of our interest, our temperament and how we perceive an object in a give time and space. Secondly, in our daily experience, one perception leads to another and in our memory, we begin to constitute what may be called a chain of



ideas or the impressions of all of our sensuous experiences. As this chain becomes longer and longer, it is divided into a number of small chains or units which are all held together, at times by one fundamental idea, at others, by another. The association of the ideas gathered from disparate situations can have very strange consequences. It is due to this conjunction, says Condillac, that Descartes all his life preferred squint-eyed persons, for the first person he fell in love with, had this defect.

On the importance of word-signs, Condillac says that without these signs there can be no progress in knowledge. To begin with, he gives an example from arithmetic. For each unit of number, we have a word, a sign, a name. The word two or three refers to two or three objects. When we use the word, four, this may refer to two objects on each side or separately. As we move further, as the units become complex for example, the word, hundred or thousand, the ideas or the units of ideas, which these words include, are very complex. Condillac quotes Locke who says that certain Americans (American Indians) did not have any idea of the number, thousand, for they had words to count only upto twenty. Condillac argues that not only thousand, they could probably not count upto twenty-one. The reason is that we do not have a word-sign for each number. To begin with, we have words for simple units with the help of which we invent others. There is a certain correlation, a certain rapport among the group of numbers and the sign they are represented with. Separated from their word-signs, the numbers cannot be imagined. When we use the word, hundred or thousand, we refer to a certain unit, as four hundred is four units of a group of hundred. One must remember three things: the *idea* of the unit, that of the *operation* with which several units have been added, and finally, the *order* in which this operation takes place. As the ideas become complex, we think only in terms of units or ensembles without considering the complexity of their constitutions. When it is an affair of the word-signs which have been invented by us



without any model such as the laws of morality, life, death and other abstract notions, we cannot communicate without the help of word-signs where each of them correspond to a highly complex constitution of ideas. It is the use of these signs which facilitates the exercise of our reflection, which in turn contributes to multiply the signs, and so it continues. The words or signs and reflections are the causes which interact with each other and contribute to their reciprocal progress. In the beginning there may be a direct correspondence between the idea and the word but as the communication process becomes complex, the words themselves become the carriers of ideas. The rapport between complex words and complex ideas is accentuated by our imagination and memory.

To have ideas upon which we can reflect, we need to have signs which serve as liens of different collections of simple ideas. Our notions are exact to the extent that we have invented with order the signs that are attached to them. But what happens in actual practice is that we acquire words before we apprehend their corresponding ideas. The reason comes after memory and it never comes with enough clarity to explain to us the corresponding complexity of ideas.

In the Buddhist tradition, the point of departure is the sense perception of the point-instant reality followed by the constitution of its image and the dichotomising process of exclusions and negations. The Condillacian enterprise is based on the process of *abstraction*. For Condillac, to abstract is to draw from or to separate one thing from another whose part it is. Consequently, the abstract ideas are partial ideas separated from their whole. Condillac refers to the prevalent theory of the ideas, that of Descartes and other philosophers. He says that there are two opinions about these ideas. For some, the Cartesians, they are innate, the others believe that they are formed by the spirit. The former are wrong, the latter are not very convincing. The action of the senses is sufficient to contribute some abstract ideas, the spirit helps to produce

more, and finally, with the concurrence of these two, we constitute a large number of them. With abstraction, we discover the rapport of resemblance and difference between the subjects. This leads to general ideas which are only summarised ideas and abbreviated expressions. The word, triangle, refers to all the triangles. An abstract name becomes a general idea every time it is a denomination of several things which have common qualities. Colour, sound, odour, etc. are both abstract and general ideas. They are abstract, for they are partial ideas which we separate from the objects. They are summarised or general for each of them designates a certain number of sensations which come to the spirit by the same organ. All these ideas are absolutely necessary. As we are obliged to speak of things as they differ from or be similar to each other, they are placed in separate classes with corresponding word-signs. But it must be underscored that it is more with rapport to the manner in which we know them than to the nature of things, that we determine their genres and species, we distribute them in different classes. The need for these different ideas and signs is due to the fact that our intellect is limited. God does not require this method as He can know all things individually at the same time. Human beings, however, have to resort to generalisation, classification and complex sign systems. We order and classify our universe to understand it better, and the words of our language, the names that we give to these complex classifications, hold these ensembles together in our memory and facilitate our communication.

Condillac criticises the realist philosophers of Europe whose ideas are not very different from the Indian realists who were opposed by the Buddhist philosophers. They believe that as the abstract natures are derived from the particulars, they are as real as the particulars. They do not realise that in the process of generalisation, in the process of constituting new combinations of abstract ideas, especially those without any

empirical model, we go far beyond the sensuous realities. The words, honesty, humanity, truth, refer to highly complex combinations of abstract ideas where the manner and the method of combinations are more important than the real nature of the abstracted notions.

For Condillac, the only way to acquire knowledge is to go to the origin of our ideas, to follow their generation, to compare them from all possible rapports ; in other words, to decompose and to compose them methodically. This is the veritable analysis of the ideas. There are some philosophers, argues Condillac, who divide this one method into separate parts. For them analysis refers only to the decompositional process, and the compositional aspect is considered synthesis. This gives the impression that one can choose any one of them. This is one reason why so many philosophers attempt to explain the composition and the generation of things that they had never decomposed. This leads to an erroneous conclusion. How can a man, argues Condillac, establish the general principles of the mechanism of a clock that he has never opened and separated all the pieces to see how they are put together in a certain correlation that makes it function the way it does. This is exactly what happens to those who depend entirely upon synthesis. All progress in knowledge is due to analysis where *decomposition* and *composition* form the two aspects of the same method. They must be followed simultaneously. It is obvious that the modern philosopher, Jacques Derrida, borrowed his ideas of *deconstruction* from Condillac except that he never understood all the implications of the Condillacian theory of analysis.

The significance of words is fixed by their usage. If a person, argues Condillac, begins to constitute his language derived from the situations of the usage of the language, he will have no problem of communication. The names given to simple ideas will be clear, for they will signify exactly what is perceived in a given situation. The same would be the case with the complex ideas, for the situations, which will be responsible for



the reunion of the simple ideas into complex ideas, will have a clear and specific correspondence. Even when he would add or subtract some from the older combination, he would know what he is doing. He would be aware of the new combinations or correlations, for he would be following the compositional process of the ideas and their corresponding words. Now, all the complexities and the confusions arise because the words or enunciations we use in our daily communication are not our creations. We make use of the words which are given to us as signifiers without any explanation of the composition of the simple ideas which are attached to them. We use the same words as the others in our community and we believe that we all attach the same significance to them. In fact, without realising what we are doing, without being conscious of it, we keep on adding or subtracting some simple ideas, thereby continuously changing the corresponding compositions, and we end up using the same words with different significations. There is also another problem. Even when our words correspond to our own compositions, it is not necessary that different persons have the same compositions. First of all, it must be noted that the sensations which are the basis of our perception are not in the object, and secondly that the same objects do not necessarily produce the same sensations. This is why Condillac had argued earlier that the significations of our enunciations are not based on the nature of the things but on the manner in which we perceive them.

Our reflection has two objects : the sensations which are present and the sensations that we have had in the past. Both of these interact with each other and lead to certain significations. As the sensible objects are highly complex, we can compare them only through abstractions, where we can perceive their common factors and their differences and accordingly we distribute them into different classes. However, when our ideas are abstract and general, they cannot be subjected to our senses for they are no more the object of the faculty that feels, but they are now



the object of the faculty that discerns, that abstracts, that compares and that judges. In all communication systems, our *memory* and our *imagination* play the most important role, for at the time of the actual communication, we use the words and enunciations which either we apprehended from specific situations or we learnt them from others, and since all this acquisition happened in the past we cannot possibly be conscious of the exact compositions of the simple ideas which correspond to our enunciations. As a result, the exchange of significations is heavily charged with *mental associations* and *imagined correlations*. It leads to a dialectical process where different combinations of simple ideas interact continuously giving rise to new significations without our necessarily being aware of this linguistic creativity.

Condillac is followed by Destutt de Tracy who continued the linguistic doctrine of the great master in his *Elémens d'idéologie*, 1817. According to Tracy, the system of signs, which we call language, is meant for intercommunication. It is used to refer to what goes on in our environment. As such, the human language is basically an analytical instrument. Its constitution follows obligatory needs of man to analyse his environment, to talk about the objects he comes in contact with, to arrange them in certain orders and combinations, to arrive at a system of comprehension. The ideas which the signs refer to are not always simple ideas. More often than not, they are highly complex and require specific, analytical sign systems.

In calculus we may begin with the sign, one, which refers to a unity. This helps us to differentiate one object from another. However, if we want to continue to count our objects and classify them, we need to invent other word-signs like, two, three, four. Now, the merit of this system is that each one of these numbers is placed equidistant from the other. In each case, there is a difference of one. This allows us to both take account of our objects and also to classify them in exact correla-

tion with each other. And, this constituting process of numbers continues and we have units like, ten, twenty, thirty, forty etc. Each unit, as we know, is constituted of ten objects and ten, twenty, thirty, forty are in exact correlation with each other. In other words, we constitute a language of calculus where there are signs or words which refer to ideas, but above all, which form by themselves, a system of communication. This system of signs itself becomes an object of human reflection.

While one can describe with extreme precision the combination of the rapports of our ideas in the context of quantity, it cannot be done in other sectors of language. However, the process of abstraction remains the same and this algebraic model fits well with the evolutionary process of language where the main preoccupation is *comparison* and *differentiation*. With the help of signs we combine our first perceptions. We form composite ideas, we perceive their internal rapports, which result in new general ideas, we analyse them, we compare them with other ideas, we modify them, envisage them in all their facets, and finally, we submit them to all possible combinations and syntactic relations. Obviously, the question that then arises is whether all these operations are possible without the help of word-signs. If we do not have these signs or words, all the groupings that we operate upon our signs would be dissolved as soon as the ideas are formed. The relationships that we establish among them would slip away as soon as they are perceived.

In the natural environment, there are only things or objects. All rapports between them are abstractions which lead to composite ideas. A rapport is nothing but a perception. It is not a thing that exists by itself. Without words, we can have only individual ideas. The system of rapports can be supported only by a system of signs.

To begin with, we have a few word-signs. This small number helps us to express a small number of ideas in different situations. The new

situations require new rapports and consequently new signs. We move from one universe of signification to another. The ideas give birth to the signs and the signs lead to new ideas. This statement of Destutt de Tracy is very similar to that of Dignāga when he states that our words have their source in concepts and our concepts are derived from words. Tracy argues that it is due to this successive interaction that the linguistic exchange evolves. The most significant point to note here is that our knowledge and our language move together. At each movement of our advancement, a new level between our language and our knowledge is re-established.

The advantage of the articulatory signs or words is that they enable us to note, delineate clearly the numerous, fine nuances and consequently to express distinctly the highly multiplied and closely related ideas. With the development of writing, the sounds acquire the quality of permanence. When man can note down his images, he can use them as *aide-mémoire*, and at the same time, he can use them to constitute further combinations. One can think of the difference between calculating verbally and with the help of number-words. Our sounds acquire a very special quality with the help of writing. All other sign systems remain at the transitory level. They can be translated but they cannot be written.

This poses the problem of *translation*, for in all sign systems, there is invariably the question of translation from one language to another. Ordinarily speaking, translation implies the combining with the signs of a language, the ideas, which are related with the signs of the other. One association of ideas is substituted for another. This requires the presence of both. Even when we express ourselves with gestures, the operation of translation continues. This process goes on in our brain, where we receive or transmit ideas, where we reflect upon the ideas communicated by other signs. Now, this process of translation, which is, in a way, the veritable process of thinking, cannot be carried on for a long time without



the help of signs, which are easy to handle, and which can be combined and recombined in innumerable ways. Without the help of these abbreviated signs, human beings cannot operate upon this vast universe of signification.

The problematics of translation described above is crucial to all human communication. When two persons talk to each other, they employ words which have specific connotations for one of the interlocutors. The other person has to envisage these words and their ideological combinations in exactly the same manner as the former to arrive at the same comprehension. Though communication is carried on on the hypothesis that the general ranges of ideas attached to each word is shared by all members of the group, the human perceptions never coincide completely. Hence, to understand the other person is to translate his sign system with his corresponding combinations of ideas. This intercommunication also helps in advancing the process of knowledge. The mere fact that the ideological fields of the one do not correspond with those of the other, there is an essential interaction, which enlarges and modifies the existing domains of ideas.

In this context, there are two extremes. Either there is absolute non-communication as each person has his own combinatory system, and none can think for, and like, the other, or, there is a considerable sharing of the experiences. The combinations can be decomposed and further analyses can be operated upon. But this progress again emphasizes the importance of the written sign. In oral communication, the necessary pause to reflect and to recognise does not exist. The process of ideological evolution is therefore twofold, from the oral to the written, and vice versa.

There is another problem. On the one hand, we need to have personal experience of the ideological field of the signs being used, and on the



other, it is obvious that no one can have this extensive experience. Moreover, these signs are continuously modifying their significance which is not a part of the perception of all those who are involved in a given communication system. It can be generally said that the sign is perfect for the one who invents it, but remains always vague and uncertain for the one who receives it.

This argument of Destutt de Tracy also implies that a sign is perfect for the one who invents it, but it is so only at the time he invents it. When he uses it at other times, at other dispositions, it is not at all certain that he himself brings together the same collection of ideas as was the case in the first instance when the sign was created. It is rather certain that, without realising consciously, he has added some, and perhaps, left some of the older ones aside. For example, when we learn words like, love and hate, we support each of them with a group of ideas. We assemble around each, a number of perceptions derived from our experience. They are neither the same as that of the one who taught us these words, nor we attach the same significance to them at all times. Both the one who first communicated these words, and the one, who later used them in different circumstances, are never sure of their exact association of ideas and the alternations due to the changes in time, circumstances, events, moral and physical dispositions. As a result, the same sign gives us an imperfect idea of its nature, followed by an idea very different from that of other members of the social group who employ it. This leads to the three problems of the nature of the sign : the characteristics of the successive rectifications, the origin of the diversity and the opposition of opinions amongst men on the ideas expressed by certain words, and the cause of the variations of these opinions at different situations of their life. *If all men, at all times, perceived the same rapports, in the same manner, argues Destutt de Tracy, it could be a simple problem. In reality it is not so. Without being conscious of it, men perceive things in different*

*manners, in different relationships, in different orders. No wonder, there are misunderstandings, and consequently, we neither agree with others now, nor with those with whom we agreed earlier.*

From Dignāga's images and conceptual constructs to Destutt de Tracy's elements of ideology, we grapple with the same fundamental problematics. The signs, words or names given to concrete or abstract objects correspond not to just simple ideas but to the compositions of ideas whose structures vary from one perception to another in different existential situations due to the obligatory needs of the exchange of signs in our complex communicational channels. It is both a creative and an evolutionary process. In other words, language must be understood in its praxis, in the very act of communication.

## REFERENCES

### DIGNĀGA IN *PRAMĀṆASAMUCCAYA*

1. The means of cognition are immediate and mediate, namely, perception, *pratyakṣa*, and inference, *anumāna*. They are two because the object to be cognised has only two aspects. Apart from the particular, *svalakṣaṇa*, and the universal, *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*, there is no other object to be cognised... (from Dignāga, On perception, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, trans. Masaaki Hattori, Harvard University Press, 1968, p.24.)
2. The cognition in which there is no conceptual construction is perception. What, then, is the conceptual construction?...the association of name, *nāman*, genus, *jāti*, etc., with a thing perceived, which results in verbal designation of the thing. In the case of arbitrary words, *yadṛccha-śabda*, proper nouns, a thing, *artha*, distinguished by a name, *nāman*, is expressed by a word such as, *diṭṭha*. In the case of genus word, *jāti śabda*, common noun, a thing distinguished by a genus is expressed by a word such as, 'go' (cow). In the case of quality words, *guṇa śabda*, adjectives, a thing distinguished by a quality is expressed by a word such as, 'śukla' (white). In the case of action words,

*kriyā śabda*, verbal nouns, a thing distinguished by an action is expressed by a word such as ‘*pācaka*’ (a cook, to cook). In the case of substance words, *dravya śabda*, a thing distinguished by a substance is expressed by a word such as, ‘*daṇḍin*’, a staff bearer, or ‘*viśāṇin*’, horned, a horn bearer. (p.25).

3. Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself as subject, *svābhāsa*, and that of the object, *viśayābhāsa*. The cognising of itself as possessing these two appearances or the self-cognition, *svasaṃvitti*, is the result of the cognitive act. Why? Because the determination of the object, *artha niścaya*, conforms with it, viz. with the self cognition. (p.28).
4. When a cognition possessing the form of an object, *svaviśayam jñānam*, is itself the object to be cognised, then, in accordance with the nature of self cognition, one conceives that secondary object, *artha*, as something either desirable or undesirable. When on the other hand, only an external thing is considered to be the object, then the means of cognising it is simply the cognition’s having the form of the object. For, in this case, we overlook the true nature of the cognition as that which is to be cognised by itself, and claim that its having the form of a thing is our means of knowing that thing. Why? Because we may say of the thing that it is known only through this, viz. through the cognition’s having the form of it. Whatever form of a thing appears in the cognition, as, for example, something white or non-white, it is an object in that form which is cognised. Thus it should be understood that the roles of the means of cognition, *pramāṇa*, and of the object to be cognised, *prameya*, corresponding to differences of aspect of the cognition, are only metaphysically attributed, *upacāryate*, to the respective distinctive factor in each case, because in their ultimate nature all elements of existence, being instantaneous, are devoid of function, *nirvyāpara*. (p.29).
5. Whatever the form in which it (a cognition) appears, that form is recognised as the object of cognition, *prameya*. The means of cognition, *pramāṇa*, and the cognition which is its result, *phala*, are respectively the form of subject in the cognition and the cognition cognising itself. Therefore, these three factors of cognition are not separate from one another... (p.29).
6. The cognition which cognises the object, a thing of colour, etc. has a twofold appearance, namely, the appearance of the object and the appearance of



itself as subject. But the cognition which cognises the cognition of the object has on the one hand, the appearance of that cognition which is in conformity with the object and on the other hand, the appearance of itself. Otherwise, if the cognition of the object had only the form of the object, or if it had only the form of itself, then the cognition of cognition would be indistinguishable from the cognition of the object. (pp.29-30).

7. **Dignāga on Nyāya** ...If the cognition, *jñāna*, itself were to be considered as the means of cognition, *pramāṇa*, then there would be a difficulty for the Naiyāyikas who are upholders of the theory that the result, *phala*, is distinct from the means inasmuch as the object, according to Nyāya doctrine, is determined, *niścitta*, by the cognition which is now defined as the means, there would be no result distinct from the means. According to the Naiyāyikas, the cognition which is of determinate nature, *vyavasāyātmakam jñānam*, is a means of cognition. When such a means of cognition operates, it naturally apprehends the object determinately, and therefore there would be no result other than the means of cognition itself.

The Naiyāyikas advance a further argument: The apprehension of a qualifier, *viśeṣaṇa jñāna*, is a means of cognition. If they consider the apprehension of a qualifier, such as like, to be a means of cognition, and that of qualified, *viśeṣya jñāna*, such as a substance, *dravya*, and so on, to be cognition as the result, then that resulting cognition could not be one in respect to the qualifier, because it, viz. the qualifier that is apprehended by a means of cognition is different from the qualified represented in the resulting cognition. The qualifier and the qualified are distinct from each other. It is unreasonable that a means of cognition should take one thing for its object and the resulting cognition another. The Naiyāyikas may argue that since it, viz. the apprehension of the qualifier is the cause, *kāraṇa*, of the apprehension of the qualified, it may be supposed to take the qualified as well for its object. If they argue thus, they are wrong because there would be the fault of implying too much, *atiprasaṅga*. For, if this were the case, all factors of the act of cognising, *kāraka*, would be without distinction, recognised as means of cognition. The reason is that, since these *kārakas*, e.g. the cogniser indicated by the nominative case, the object indicated by the accusative case, the locus of cognition indicated by the loca-



tive case, are causes of the cognition of the qualified, like the apprehension of the qualifier, they would be the means of that resulting cognition of the qualified. Therefore it is reasonable to consider that that which is said to possess the act of cognising in respect to an object, i.e. the cognition as the means of cognising an object is itself the result of that act of cognising. (pp.39-40).

8. **Dignāga on Vaiśeṣika** ...In the case of those who claim that the contact of sense and object is the means of cognition involved in ascertainment and claim that ascertainment also arises from the contact of sense and object, the extended application, *atideśa*, of the term, contact of sense and object, *indriyārtha saṃnikarṣa*, to the case of ascertainment is not admissible. If it were to be admitted, even doubt, *saṃśaya*, and inference, *anumāna*, would be regarded as cognition produced by the contact of sense and object, because in the cases of these cognitions the sense comes into contact with a real object; namely, a general feature of a thing that is an inferential mark of another thing. Again, they may argue that the sense grasps an object with its qualifier such as genus and the like, since these are inherent, *samaveta*, in the object, and that hence there arises ascertainment by the mere contact of sense and object. To such an argument we reply: according to the view of those who claim that the contact of sense and object is the means of cognition, it would follow that no doubt could arise, much less removed by ascertainment, because when a man had a desire to apprehend an object with the question, 'what is this?', he would grasp the object wholly since there would be contact of his senses with all factors constituting the object... Since sense cognitions apprehend merely their respective objects, it is impossible that they are related to the qualifiers of the objects such as genus and the like. In those cases in which an object is cognised as dependent upon genus, etc., it is after having perceived the two elements, namely, the object itself and the qualifier, surely that one conceives by means of conceptual construction, the relation, *sambandha*, of these two elements in the following manner: this object possesses this genus, *idam asya sāmānyam*, this object possesses this substance, *idam asya dravyam*, etc. Thus, in fact, the object is conceived as the "possessor of, -mat, -vat", or "locus, *adhikaraṇa*, *āśraya*, of" the genus, as "possessor of" or "locus of" substance, etc. Then by the elision of the suffix

expressing possession, *matub lopa*, or by the ascription of identity, *abhedopacāra*, between the object itself and its description as the “possessor of” or “locus of” substance, etc., the object is grasped as “existent, *sat*”, “horned, *viṣāṇin*,” etc. Moreover, the qualifier is consistent only with the mental cognition, since it is called forth by remembrance. Otherwise, if the cognition which relates the two separately perceived things were to be regarded as perception, then, even the cognition “the sweet scented, *surabhi*, tastes sweet, *madhura*” would be accepted as perception. This, however, is unreasonable because in this case the qualifier, i.e. the sweet taste, and the qualified, i.e. the sweet scent, are grasped by different senses, namely, the gustatory and olfactory senses. Thus, the cognitions which are dependent upon genus and species or which are dependent upon substance, attribute, and action cannot be identified with the cognition produced by the sense which operates merely upon the object itself. (pp.43-44).

9. **Dignāga on Sāṃkhya** ...If it were admitted that there is a distinctive feature of a class of objects and that that distinctive feature is constituted by the configuration belonging to that class, then with various configurations such as “long”, *dīrgha*, “short”, *hrasva*, etc., we should find that they would furnish a single object. It is held by the Sāṃkhyikas that the sound of *vīṇā*, of a drum, and all other sounds, although they are different from each other, are grasped by the same auditory sense, inasmuch as they are within the boundary of the sound class. That is to say, they recognise the boundary of the class objects corresponding to a certain sum, there are many different sub classes within that class, each with its own configuration. Therefore, many different configurations would be recognised as one and the same object. Further, if a class of objects were to be distinguished from another class of objects by its configuration, then in spoons, ornaments, etc., of the same configuration, which are made of gold, silver, etc., there would be an absence of distinction. Likewise, objects belonging to different classes, gold and sound, for example, would also belong to the same class, because according to the Sāṃkhyikas, they derive from a uniform source and so must have the same configuration. In that case there could be no working of each sense on its own object. The functioning, *vṛtti*, of a sense on its object may imply either (a) the apprehension of the

mere configuration of the class of objects, *jāti mātra*, or (b) the apprehension of the qualifiers of the class, i.e. the three *guṇas*, which are the nature of *sukha*, pleasure, and the others, viz. *duḥkha*, pain, and *moha*, delusion. In the first case, if there is apprehension of the mere configuration of the class of objects, then there would be non-apprehension of the characteristic feature, *svarūpa*, of the object. If there were apprehension by the sense organ of the mere configuration, *saṁsthāna*, peculiar to the class of sounds or of any other object, there would follow the obscurity of its never apprehending the object distinctly as *sukha*, etc., in its characteristic feature. For it is a fact of experience that, insofar as a man apprehends indistinctively only the configuration of an object, he does not apprehend the characteristic feature of the object. For instance, a man who perceives merely a cow-like shape in the twilight has no distinct perception of a cow itself. If, on the other hand, there is apprehension only of a certain configuration, then there would be non-apprehension of the difference among objects belonging to different classes. That is to say, there would be no apprehension of the distinction between sound and other objects. In the same way, there would be no apprehension of the difference between objects belonging to the same class, for example, the sound of a *vīṇā* and that of a drum because there is no difference of configuration between them (pp.53-54).

10. **Dignāga on Mīmāṃsā** ... Perception is that by means of which an ascertainment, *niścaya*, in the form of 'this is a cow' or 'this is a horse' arises in regard to 'this', the immediately perceived object. This statement of the Mīmāṃsakas is also untenable... One cognises an object as a cow or the like when it is associated with cow-ness, *gotva*, and other such qualifiers. But sense cognition, *akṣa buddhi*, has no ability, *śakti*, to bring about the association of the qualifier with the perceived thing. Therefore, sense cognition cannot result in the ascertainment of an object. According to your view, sense cognition is able to perceive cow-ness and also perceive the thing which is the abode, *āśraya*, of that cow-ness, but not to relate them together. Insofar as there is no relation between them, there cannot be the ascertainment of an object as a cow, etc., by perception. Therefore, in all cases of our cognising a qualifier, *viśeṣaṇa*, with a qualified, *viśeṣya*, or a name, *abhidhāna*, with an object



named, *abhidheya*, there is involved a conceptual construction, *vikalpa*, produced by the mind, *manas*, which ascribes identity, *abhedopacāra*, to the two factors, and there is not sense cognition. If you ask why, we reply: the object of the sense, *indriya gocara*, is the form, *rūpa*, which is to be cognised simply as it is *svasaṃvedya*, and which is inexpressible, *anirdeśya*.

Although the object of the sense is conceived through conceptual construction as the possessor of many properties, it appears to the sense as something particular, *asādhāraṇa*. Therefore, it, viz. the object, is a cause of the rise of a cognition which possesses the form of that particular object. This object of the sense is, as it were, a part of the cognition itself, and therefore is self-cognisable. It is impossible to describe this object as having such and such a nature because what is inexpressible is that which possesses a universal for its object. Furthermore, if a thing were to become the object of sense perception in its universal aspect also, then every thing would be the object of a sense. If it, viz. sense cognition, were established as a cognition of a thing in all its aspects, then it could not be called perceptual cognition, *pratyakṣa buddhi*. The word, *pratyakṣa*, perception, may be applied to a means of cognition, *pramāṇa*, to a cognition, *jñāna*, and to an object, *viśaya*. Of these three applications, the application to a means of cognition is primary, *mukhya*, to the others, secondary, *upacāra*. Among these secondary applications, an object is called, *pratyakṣa*, in the secondary sense since it occurs in dependence upon the sense, *akṣam prati vartate*, and therefore is equivalent to the sense faculty which is a means of cognition. If one apprehends by a cognition the universal aspect, *sāmānyākāra*, of colour, *rūpa*, and other objects, then that cognition should not be called, *pratyakṣa*, i.e. a cognition depending upon the sense, *akṣam prati*, since it occurs independently of the sense by the ascription to an unreal universal of identity with the object of a sense. (pp.67-68).

#### CONDILLAC IN L'ART DE PENSER

1. Soit que nous nous élevions jusques dans les cieux, soit que nous descendions jusques dans les abîmes, nous ne sortons point de nous-même; ce n'est jamais que notre propre pensée que nous apercevons, et nous trouvons dans nos



connoissances et de toutes nos facultés. (Condillac, *Traité de l'art de penser*, 1796, Vrin reprint, 1981, p.195).

2. Ainsi quand je dirai que nous n'avons point d'idées qui ne viennent des sens, il faut bien se souvenir que je parle que de l'état où nous sommes depuis le péché. Cette proposition appliquée à l'ame dans l'état d'innocence, ou après sa séparation du corps; seroit tout-à-fait fausse. Je ne traite pas des connoissances de l'ame dans ces deux derniers états; parce que je sais raisonner que d'après l'expérience. (p.198).
3. Descartes conserva toujours du goût pour les yeux louches, parce que la première personne qu'il avoit aimée avoit ce défaut. (p.217).
4. Il ya donc trois choses à distinguer dans nos sensations: 1. La perception que nous éprouvons. 2. Le rapport que nous en faisons à quelque chose hors de nous. 3. Le jugement que ce que nous rapportons aux choses leur appartient en effet. (p.202).
5. La vérité n'est qu'un rapport aperçu entre deux idées : et il y a deux sortes de vérités. Quand je dis, cet arbre est plus grand que cet arbre, je porte un jugement qui peut cesser d'être vrai, parce que le plus petit peut devenir le plus grand. Il en est de même de tous nos jugements, lorsque nous nous bornons à observer des qualités qui ne sont pas essentielles aux choses. Ces sortes de vérités se nomment contingentes. Mais ce qui est vrai, ne peut cesser de l'être, lorsque nous raisonnons sur des qualités essentielles aux objets que nous étudions. L'idée d'un triangle représentera éternellement un triangle, l'idée de deux angles droit représentera éternellement deux angles droits : il sera donc toujours vrai que les angles d'un triangle sont égaux à deux droits. Voilà tout le mystère de vérités, qu'on appelle nécessaires et éternelles. C'est par le moyen de quelque abstractions que les sens nous en donnent la connoissance. Il y a des différences à remarquer entre les idées confuses et les idées distinctes, entre les vérités contingentes, et les vérités nécessaires. (p.203).
6. Tous nos besoins tiennent les uns aux autres, et on en pourroit considérer les perceptions comme une suite d'idées fondamentales, auxquelles on rapporteroit toutes celles qui font partie de nos connoissances. Au dessus de chacune s'élèveroient d'autres suites d'idées qui formeroient des espèces de chaînes,

dont la force seroit entièrement dans l'analogie des signes, dans l'ordre des perceptions, et dans la liaison que les circonstances, qui réunissent quelquefois les idées les plus disparates, auroient formée... On peut même remarquer qu'à mesure que la chaîne s'étend, elle se subdivise en différens chaînons en sorte que plus on s'éloigne du premier anneau, plus les chaînons s'y multiplient... Les différentes chaînes ou chaînons, que je suppose au dessus de chaque idée fondamentale, seroient liés par la suite des idées fondamentales, et par quelques anneaux qui seroient vraisemblablement communs à plusieurs; car les mêmes objets, et par conséquent les mêmes idées se rapportent souvent à différents besoins. Ainsi de toutes nos connoissances, il ne se formeroit qu'une seule et même chaîne, dont les chaînons se réuniroient à certains anneaux, pour se séparer à d'autres. (p.212).

7. Locke a fait voir le plus grand danger des associations d'idées, lorsqu'il a remarqué qu'elles sont l'origine de la folie. "Un homme, dit-il, fort sage et de très bon sens en toute autre chose, peut être aussi fou sur un certain article, qu'aucun de ceux qu'on renferme aux petites maisons, si par quelque violente impression qui se soit faite subitement dans son esprit, ou par une longue application à une espèce particulière de pensée, il arrive que des idées incompatibles soient jointes si fortement ensemble dans son esprit, qu'elles y demeurent unies". (p.218).
8. Nous ne pouvons donc réfléchir sur les substances, qu'autant que nous avons des signes qui déterminent le nombre et la variété des propriétés que nous y avons remarquées, et que nous voulons réunir dans des idées complexes, comme nous les réunissons hors de nous dans des sujets... La nécessité des signes est encore bien sensible dans les idées complexes que nous formons sans modèles, c'est-à-dire, dans les idées que nous nous faisons des êtres moraux. Quand nous avons rassemblé des idées que nous ne voyons nulle part réunies, qu'est-ce qui en fixoit les collections, si nous ne les attachions à des mots qui sont comme des liens qui les empêchent de s'échapper? (p.226).
9. C'est donc l'usage des signes, qui facilite l'exercice de la réflexion: mais cette faculté contribue à son tour à multiplier les signes, et par-là elle peut tous les jours prendre un nouvel essor. Ainsi les signes et la réflexion sont des causes,

qui se prêtent des secours mutuels, et qui concourent réciproquement à leur progrès. (p.227).

10. Pour un être qui ne réfléchit pas, pour nous-mêmes, dans ces moments où quoiqu'éveillés nous ne faisons que végéter, les sensations ne sont que des sensations, et elles deviennent des idées, que lorsque la réflexion nous les fait considérer comme images de quelque chose. (p.236).
11. Il (Locke) s'est aperçu que les noms sont nécessaires pour les idées faites sans modèles, mais il n'en a pas saisi la vraie raison. "L'esprit, dit-il, ayant mis de la liaison entre les parties détachées de ses idées complexes, cette union qui n'a aucun fondement particulier dans la nature, cesseroit, s'il n'y avait quelque chose qui la maintînt". Ce raisonnement devoit, comme il l'a fait, l'empêcher de voir la nécessité des signes pour les notions des substances; car ces notions ayant un fondement dans la nature, c'étoit une conséquence que la réunion de leurs idées simples se conservât dans l'esprit sans le secours des mots... Voici ce qui a empêché Locke de découvrir combien les signes sont nécessaires à l'exercice des opérations de l'âme. Il suppose que l'esprit fait des propositions mentales dans lesquelles il joint ou sépare les idées sans l'intervention des mots. Il prétend même que la meilleure voie pour arriver à des connoissances seroit de considérer les idées en elles-mêmes... Il faut bien peu de chose pour arrêter les plus grands génies dans leur progrès. (238).
12. Mais il faut remarquer que c'est moins par rapport à la nature des choses, que par rapport à la manière dont nous les connoissons, que nous en déterminons les genres et les espèces, ou pour parler un langage plus familier, que nous les distribuons dans des classes subordonnées les unes aux autres. (241).
13. L'obscurité et la confusion viennent de ce qu'en prononçant les mêmes mots, nous croyons nous accorder à exprimer les mêmes idées; quoique d'ordinaire les uns ajoutent à une idée complexe des idées parties qu'un autre en retranche. De là il arrive que différentes combinaisons n'ont qu'un même signe, et que les mêmes mots ont dans différentes bouches et souvent dans la même des acceptions bien différentes. D'ailleurs, comme l'étude des langues, avec quelque peu de soin qu'elle se fasse, ne laisse pas de demander quelque réflexion, on coupe court, et on rapporte les signes à des réalités, dont on n'a



point d'idées. Tels sont dans le langage de bien des philosophes, les termes d'être, de substance, d'essence, etc. (289).

14. La liaison des idées avec les signes est une habitude qu'on ne sauroit contracter tout d'un coup, principalement s'il en résulte des notions fort composées. Les enfants ne parviennent que fort tard à avoir des idées précises des nombres 1000, 10000 etc. Ils ne peuvent les acquérir que par un long et fréquent usage, qui leur apprend à multiplier l'unité, et à fixer chaque collection par des noms particulier. Il nous sera également impossible parmi la quantité d'idées complexes qui appartiennent à la métaphysique et à la morale, de donner de la précision aux termes que nous aurons choisis, si nous voulons dès la première fois et sans autre précaution les charger d'idées simples. Il nous arrivera de les prendre tantôt dans un sens et bientôt après dans un autre; parce que n'ayant gravé que superficiellement dans notre esprit les collections d'idées, nous y ajouterons ou nous en retrancherons souvent quelque chose, sans nous en apercevoir. (pp.292-293).
15. Notre réflexion a deux objets: les sensations actuelles, et les sensations que nous nous souvenons d'avoir eues; et ces deux choses s'éclairent mutuellement. Tantôt ce que nous avons éprouvé, nous aide à mieux démêler ce que nous éprouvons; d'autres fois ce que nous éprouvons, corrige des erreurs où nous sommes tombés par des jugements précipités. Les objets sensibles étant fort composés, nous ne pouvons les comparer qu'en formant des abstractions: par-là nous voyons ce qui convient à tous, et ce qui les distingue, et nous les distribuons en différentes classes. Or les idées ne peuvent plus tomber sous les sens, lorsqu'elles sont abstraites et générales. Nous ne saurions voir un corps en générale, un arbre en général. Nous ne saurions même rien imaginer de semblable. Il en est de même de toutes les idées sensibles, lorsqu'on les considère d'une manière générale, un son en général, une saveur en générale. Les idées ainsi considérées deviennent intellectuelles: car quoique originellement elles n'aient été que des sensations, elles ne sont plus l'objet de la faculté qui sent; elles sont l'objet de la faculté intelligente, c'est-à-dire, de la faculté qui abstrait, qui compare, et qui juge. Notre réflexion peut se borner aux idées intellectuelles; car je puis ne réfléchir que sur des idées abstraites: mais nous ne saurions la borner à des idées sensibles. Nous ne réfléchissons, par exemple,



sur la grandeur d'un corps, que parce que nous comparons sa grandeur avec celle d'un autre corps. Dès-lors notre esprit est donc occupé d'une idée commune, abstraite et par conséquent intellectuelle. (pp.297-298).

16. Analyser, c'est décomposer, comparer et saisir les rapports. Mais l'analyse ne décompose, que pour faire voir, autant que possible, l'origine et la génération des choses. Elle doit donc présenter les idées partielles dans le point de vue, où l'on voit se reproduire le tout qu'on analyse. Celui qui décompose au hasard, ne fait que des abstractions : celui qui n'abstrait pas toutes les qualités d'un objet, ne donne que des analyses incomplètes : celui qui ne présente pas ses idées abstraites dans l'ordre qui peut facilement faire connaître la génération des objets, fait des analyses peu instructives, et ordinairement fort obscures. L'analyse est donc la décomposition entière d'un objet, et la distribution des parties dans l'ordre où la génération devient facile. (p.304).
17. Les philosophes ne font des raisonnements si obscures et si confus, que parce qu'ils ne soupçonnent pas qu'il y ait des idées qui soient l'ouvrage de l'esprit; ou que, s'ils le soupçonnent, ils sont incapables d'en découvrir la génération. Prévenus que les idées sont innées, ou que, telles qu'elles sont, elles ont été bien faites; ils croient n'y devoir rien changer, et ils adoptent avec confiance. Comme on ne peut bien analyser que les idées qu'on a soi-même formées avec ordre, leur analyse sont presque toujours défectueuses. Ils étendent ou restreignent mal à propos la signification des mots, ils la changent sans s'en apercevoir, ou même ils rapportent les mots à des notions vagues et à des réalités intelligibles. Il faut, qu'on me permette de le répéter, il faut donc se faire une nouvelle combinaison d'idées; commencer par les plus simples que les sens transmettent; en former des notions complexes, qui, en se combinant à leur tour, en produiront d'autres, et ainsi de suite. Pourvu que nous consacrons des noms distincts à chaque collection, cette méthode ne peut manquer de nous faire éviter l'erreur. (p.312).
18. Il y a encore une différence entre la méthode de Descartes et celle que j'essaie d'établir. Selon lui, il faut commencer par définir les choses, et regarder les définitions comme des principes propres à en faire découvrir les propriétés. Je crois au contraire qu'il faut commencer par chercher les propriétés, et il me paroît que c'est avec fondement. Si les notions que nous sommes capables

d'acquérir, ne sont, comme je l'ai fait voir, que différentes collections d'idées simples, que l'expérience nous a fait rassembler sous certain noms; il est bien plus naturel de les former, en cherchant les idées dans le même ordre que l'expérience les donne, que de commencer par les définitions, pour déduire ensuite les différentes propriétés des choses...Les Scholastiques et les Cartésiens n'ont connu ni l'origine ni la génération de nos connoissances: c'est que le principe des idées innées, et la notion vague de l'entendement. d'où ils sont partis, n'ont aucune liaison avec cette découverte. (pp.313-315).

#### DESTUTT DE TRACY IN *ELÉMENTS D'IDÉOLOGIE*

1. Le rapport est cette vue de notre esprit, cet acte de notre faculté de penser par lequel nous rapprochons une idée d'une autre, par lequel nous les lions, les comparons ensemble d'une manière quelconque. *Eléments d'idéologie*, 1817, reprint Vrin, 1970, pp.48-49).
2. Cette opération de l'esprit, qui consiste à rassembler plusieurs idées pour n'en former qu'une seule, à laquelle on donne un nom qui les réunit, bien que très commune assurément, n'a point elle-même de nom dans la langue française : on peut l'appeler *concréaire*, par opposition à *abstraire*, nom que l'on a donné à l'opération inverse dont nous allons parler. C'est ainsi que l'on appelle *termes concrets* les adjectifs, tels que pur, bon, etc., qui exprime une qualité considérée comme unie à son sujet, tandis que l'on appelle *termes abstraits* les mots pureté, bonté etc., qui expriment ces qualités séparées de tout sujet. De même on dit que trois mètres est un nombre concret, et que trois tout court est un nombre abstrait. (p.83).
3. Mais nous avons observé de plus que nos idées composées, c'est-à-dire toutes nos idées, excepté la simple sensation, n'ont pas d'autre soutien, d'autre lien qui unisse leurs éléments, que le signe qui les exprime et qui les fixe dans notre mémoire, et que par conséquent, sans l'usage de ces signes, toutes ces réunions seraient aussitôt dissoutes que formées, aussitôt perdues que trouvées ; que nos premières conceptions seraient toujours à refaire, et que notre esprit resterait dans une éternelle enfance : c'est-là encore un fait certain ; néanmoins il faut le prouver par des exemples, et indiquer les causes par quelques réflexions sur nous-même. (p.325).

4. Traduire est une opération par laquelle on unit aux signes d'une langue les idées qui étaient jointes à ceux d'un autre langage ; à une première association elle en substitue une seconde, et par conséquent elle nécessite de les avoir toutes deux présentes à la fois à l'esprit. Cette opération a lieu toutes les fois que nous transportons nos idées d'une de nos langues parlées dans une autre ; mais elle n'a pas moins lieu quand nous exprimons des signes par des gestes, des gestes par des hiéroglyphes ou autres figures, ces figures par des mots, ou seulement quand nous substituons un système de signes de chacune de ces espèces à un autre système de la même espèce : en générale, il y a traduction dès que nous mettons un langage à la place d'un autre. Cette opération de traduire se fait également dans nos têtes, soit que nous émettions des idées, soit que nous les recevions, dès que la langue dans laquelle nous les recevons ou les émettons n'est pas celle avec laquelle sont intimement liées en nous. (p.373).
5. ...notre faculté de penser toute entière consiste à recevoir des impressions, à observer leur qualité, c'est-à-dire leur rapport à nous et leur rapport entr'elles ; à les classer ou les réunir de mille manières différentes d'après ces rapports ; à en former divers groupes qui constituent les idées que nous avons, soit des êtres individuels et réels, soit des propriétés et des affectations de ces individus, soit des êtres généralisés et abstraits ; et enfin à examiner sous tous leurs aspects ces idées déjà composées, et à en tirer de nouvelles vues et de nouveaux sentiments. (p.324).



## The Dialectics of Langue and Parole *parole parlée* and *parole parlante*

The French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, believes that if language is an ensemble of differences, it is by means of *parole* that this differentiation is realised. *Langue/parole* polarity is then taken not only as social/individual but also and primarily as a dialectics between a given, a language that is instituted, presented to the speaker as a sort of a norm and a heritage, the *parole parlée*, and the language in praxis, with which the speaking subject expresses himself, the *parole parlante*. Merleau-Ponty thus goes beyond the *langue/parole* polarity of Saussure. It brings him closer to the Buddhist theory of signification as a dynamic system of exclusions and negations and also to the Abélardian and Condillacian propositions on language discussed earlier.

To understand this dialectical praxis of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante*, one should, according to Merleau-Ponty, consider this as a movement of transcendence that defines man as a creator of significations. The world of *parole parlée* is present like a horizon. It enables an individual to orient himself, to situate things by situating himself with rapport to them. It remains always in the state of transcendence but this transcendence is not of the usual transcendental order. There is something real, the *parole parlée*, to transcend, to be dialectically related with. The *parole parlée* represents certain ensembles



of complex ideas whose combinations are mediated across their interaction with those of the *parole parlante*. It is due to the significative intention which is based on the excess of what one wants to say over what has already been said. The speech act invariably leads to the surpassing of the signification by the signifier. For Merleau-Ponty, all expression is a provisional fixation : *fixation*, for we do understand something, *provisional*, for the signified like the signifier is inscribed in the indefinite movement of differentiation and articulation that characterises the thinking thought, the *pensée pensante*, and the speaking speech, the speech in praxis, the *parole parlante*.

We must realise that *langue* and *parole* are conceptual constructs. *Langue* is what is supposed to belong to the society, to the community, to a group, which by definition is heterogeneous. It is not a totality due to a mathematical addition of the *paroles* of every member of the group. At best, it is an approximation. It is a given, a horizon, which as Merleau-Ponty says, enables one to situate oneself vis-à-vis the universe one is a part of. *Parole*, on the other hand, is also a reality which is in constant flux as the speaking subject is not a static entity. The *parole parlante* derives its sum of significations from a series of existential experiences which are always at variance with the so-called norms of the *langue*.

When a child is born, he is thrown into a ready-made universe of significations. In the beginning, as a speaking subject, he operates primarily at the level of senses where in Buddhist terms, the significations are affirmative and positive. As the existential experiences accumulate, as the process of conceptualisation begins, as the speaking subject is slowly transformed into a thinking subject, the dialectical interaction is set into motion. According to Dignāga, the Names or utterances are concepts whose significance varies with their creators. It all depends upon the way the dialectics of negation has been carried out, the way the various juxtapositions are presented. Obviously this rules

out the fixation of the given, the *a priori* authority of the word. The *parole parlée* must interact with the *parole parlante* to create language as a living organ.

Abélard had stated that communication takes place between two thinking beings. The acquisition of language is a process that is both conscious and unconscious. The subject is neither all-important nor it is submerged in the so-called *langue* of the culture. The acquisition of language, and consequently of knowledge, follows not only the path of normal communal experiences but also of individual existential assertions. The world before us must not only be apprehended but it must also be interpreted. There are two processes simultaneously at work, the process of *acquisition* and the process of *appropriation*. The individual, the subject of the *parole parlante*, is a member of a community, a group, but this individual never loses his individuality. When two thinking beings use similar words to express their thoughts, more often than not, they do not accompany them with the same conceptual constructs, or as Condillac would say, with the same ensembles of partial ideas.

It is obvious that there is no such thing as a fixed language, the so-called *langue*. It belongs to a community of speakers who are all the time in the process of speaking, in other words, participating in its praxis where new significations are constantly being created. In Buddhist terms, the social reality, which includes linguistic reality par excellence, is always in flux. The affirmative reality is only the point-instant which fades into the past as soon as it is realised in the present.

The speaking subject of the child does not know the exact significance of the vocables he uses. The communicative process is a creative process. By speaking, by attempting to use his words in proper contexts, by dialectically engaging the other in the expression of thought, the significations of the signs are crystallised. As Merleau-Ponty has

stated, the *parole* is that paradoxical operation where we attempt to reach, with the help of the words whose significance is a given, at the disposal of the speakers, an intention that goes far beyond the expected. As such, the *parole parlée*, the socially instituted entity, presupposes the *parole parlante*. To speak is to introduce differences which were not there before. The *parole* realises a signification without giving any manifest explanation. In this historical praxis, the sedimentation is not only an accumulation, it is also an integration.

The speaking subject is not only a consumer of significations already established, in the praxis of communication, he also participates in creating new significations. In a way, in this praxis, signification is both absent and present. The significative intention tries to go beyond, to absorb what is present, to reveal what is absent. It leads to a conceptual negotiation between the two poles of the ambiguous linguistic spectrum. To acquire a language, says Merleau-Ponty, is to enter into the whole, to take charge of the movement of differentiation and articulation. And this enterprise continues indefinitely. As such, the speaking subject is not only supposed to have acquired the language when he has mastered the basic structures of the language, the Chomskian acquisition, but it continues to be acquired and appropriated as the speaking subject moves beyond the so-called grammatical constructs to logical and conceptual constructs in the domain of signification. The speaking faculty, the expressive operation is expressive only in the sense that it is differentiative. Significance is always negative and differentiative but this differentiation does not have a definite form. It is an open-end affair. To speak is to continuously explore the possibilities of the distinctions between the signs of the speaking subject and those of the "other". It is a continuous process of give and take, a continuous linguistic exercise of negotiating through the uncertainties and hazards of understanding and misunderstanding.



In the history of signification, there are two extreme positions : either the word has no significance at all, as for the radical Nominalists of the fourteenth century, or the word is primordial, its significance is eternal, as for the Indian Realists of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsa traditions. The French tradition of *Conceptualism*, since Abélard, negotiates a middle path. There is a certain significance of the *parole parlée*, however, ambiguous it may be. The speaking subject does not merely follow the rules of the game already laid down, simultaneously, he acts as a speaking and a thinking subject, and depending upon specific existential situations, he conforms to what is expected of him or creates new significations in the communicative space of dialectical interaction. There is as such no *a priori* transcendental thought of the speaker which continuously transcends the linguistic horizon. The merging significations interact with those which are already there.

Praxis and creativity go together. Like any other human domain, within the space of communicative exercise, the speaking subject continues to consume and create. To consume is to stay within. To create is to go beyond. To transcend means to transcend something that exists empirically in this universe. The conceptual transcendence has a certain coordination, *sārūpya*, with the perceptions based on senses. As such, the conceptual imagination is not an imagination in the void. The image is never identical with the thing it is the image of, but there is always a certain coordination, hence, the conceptual constructs, the emerging significations do take into account those they interact with. The interaction between *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* is a dialectical interaction par excellence.

This dialectics is understood in the veritable praxis of signification. To signify is the same thing as constituting an intellection, says Abélard, however, to signify something is not the same thing as to constitute an intellection thereof :



*Nam et significare idem est quod intellectum constituere, non tamen significare aliquid idem est quod intellectum de eo constituere (Tractatus, 91).*

This rather complex statement of Abélard is better understood if we compare it with an earlier proposition where he says that there are innumerable modes of intelligence of a thing which are not its modes of existence :

*Multi namque et innumerabiles modi sunt intelligentie cuiuslibet rei, qui non sunt existentie ipsius... (Tractatus, 82).*

In other words, when we deal with the linguistic praxis of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante*, we move from the logical constructs of semantics to the conceptual constructs of semiotics, where there is no one to one correspondence between the *signifiant* and the *signifié*. This semantic dichotomy is dissolved in the reunion of these two poles of signification. As *parole parlante* deals with existential, experiential significations, the individual intellections are based on the perceptions and the imaginary conceptual constructs of the objects, which are very often, as asserts Abélard, at variance with their physical existence. And, in the ongoing communication system, the intellections themselves become the bases of further dialectical interaction. It is probably in the same context that we can understand the Abélardian proposition: the signification that the thing bestows on the word, the thing itself does not possess. We have an excellent example of this phenomenon during the celebrations of the goddess, Durgā. Thousands of statues of Durgā are made during this period. They are all physically different from each other, yet because of their iconic characteristics they represent the same goddess. In a way, none of them is Durgā, yet each of them has the power of signification of the corresponding goddess. This signification is independent of any given form, any given statue. In the end of the

celebrations, all statues are immersed in the river waters. They are physically dissolved but their signification continues to inhabit the sacred universe. Each statue, each thing, bestows on the word, the signifier, a significance, the given statue, the given thing does not possess. This characteristic of signification transcending the signifier is the veritable basis of the semiotics of language. The physical configurations, the articulatory contours are only the points of departure for any communication system. As the dialectical interaction of the intellections of the thinking beings takes place, new semiotic horizons emerge, where *l'homme de parole* is not always aware of the new fields of signification even when he is an active participant.

All semiotic creativity is an attempt at a certain transcendence, a certain going beyond. Another example in this context may be the *tāṇḍava nṛtya*, the cosmic dance of the god Śiva. Every artist has to adhere to the iconographic details but the artistic creation, or the creation of signification, lies in a certain transcendence of the physical form, in creating a certain conceptual construct of the cosmic dance which is invariably a resultant of an intense reflection of an existential experience of the cosmic universe, of the contours of a certain cosmology. In other words, the *parole parlée*, the given, the physical iconography is only a point of departure, the creativity lies in the existential praxis, in the *parole parlante*. In the Western tradition, one can think of Jesus on the Cross. Every painting of Jesus on the Cross will present a human figure and a cross but the artistic creation, or the creation of signification does not lie in the physical configuration. It is always an affair of creating a field of signification, a certain universe of agony and ecstasy, a certain theological, cosmological, conceptual construct that Jesus on the Cross is supposed to be. In other words, the semiotic field can be created only by a certain transcendence.

This relation between the *signifiant* and the *signifié*, this going beyond the physical, this transcendence in the existential experience is presented by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Questions de méthode* as :

*Mais le rapport du signe au signifié ne peut être conçu, ici, dans la forme d'une signification empirique : le mouvement signifiant en tant que le langage est à la fois une attitude immédiate de chacun par rapport à tous et un produit humain — est lui-même projet. Cela signifie que le projet existentiel sera dans le mot qui le dénotera, non comme le signifié — qui, par principe, est dehors — mais comme son fondement originel et sa structure même. Et, sans doute, le mot même de langage a une signification conceptuelle : une partie du langage peut désigner le tout conceptuellement. Mais le langage n'est pas dans le mot comme la réalité qui fonde toute nomination ; c'est plutôt le contraire et tout mot est tout le langage...en effet le mot, bien qu'il désigne régressivement son acte, renvoie à la compréhension fondamentale de la réalité humaine en chacun et en tous; et cette compréhension, toujours actuelle, est donnée dans toute praxis...Dans le langage, autrement dit, l'homme se désigne en tant qu'il est l'objet de l'homme. Mais dans l'effort pour retrouver la source de tout signe et par conséquent, de toute objectivité, le langage se retourne sur lui-même pour indiquer les moments d'une compréhension perpétuellement en acte puisqu'elle n'est rien d'autre que l'existence elle-même. (Sartre, Critique de la raison dialectique, Paris, 1960, p.106).*

In a somewhat similar context, Dignāga states :

*Cognition of empirical reality, samvrti-saj-jñāna, is not a true perception because it superimposes something extraneous upon things which are only empirically true, samvrti-sat, and thus functions through the conceptualisation of forms of those extraneous things.*



*Inference and the cognition which is its result, etc. are not perceptions because they arise through the conceptualisation of what formally has been perceived. And, we call the cognition itself, pramāṇa, literally, a means of cognising, because it is usually conceived to include the act of cognising, although primarily it is a result. Here we do not admit, as the realists do, that the resulting cognition, pramāṇa-phala, differs from the means of cognition. The resulting cognition arises bearing in itself the form of the cognised object and thus is understood to include the act of cognising, savyāpāra. For this reason, it is metaphorically called, pramāṇa, the means of cognition, although it is devoid of this activity, vyāpāra. For instance, an effect is said to assume the form of its cause when it arises in conformity with its cause, although in fact it is devoid of the act of assuming the form of its cause... Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself, as subject, svabhāsa, and that of the object, viśayābhāsa. The cognising of itself as possessing these two appearances or the self-cognition, svasamvitti, is the result of the cognitive act. (Pramāṇasamuccaya, p.28).*

What is underscored in these two propositions, the Sartrean existential phenomenology and Dignāga's theory of perception, is that all signification is created in the domain of cognition and conceptualisation and that this domain is quite different from the usual empirical domain. The Buddhist cognitive act is an act in existential praxis where the words or the utterances of our language are charged with new significations. Whether this creative movement is from within or from without, from the particular to the universal, from the external reality to the cognising self, we are always in the domain of metaphorical conceptualisation, asserts Dignāga. There is always a certain coordination between the cognising self and what it cognises. And this coordination of form and content is dialectically related with the cognitive act of the



“other” in any ongoing communication system. There is no cognition in a void. The *parole parlée* can only be transcended, it cannot be abolished. As such, it is the dialectical interaction between the two cognitions, the cognition of the “being” and the cognition of the “other” where ultimately the significative act is realised.

The concepts of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* do not necessarily refer to the spoken speech or the oral tradition only. In modern linguistics, the spoken variety has always been given the privileged position. It is primarily due to the fact that the descriptive linguistics concerned itself with the articulatory systems of the societies where there were no or little traditions of writing. This has led to an impasse in further development in linguistic studies. There have been entirely unnecessary and futile debates about the primacy of the oral or written language. Wherever there is a tradition of written language, it is an integral part of the linguistic communication of a community. It is an affair of different registers. What was unfortunately not recognised in modern linguistics was that even in the so-called most primitive societies with only oral tradition, there are always different levels or registers of speech. There is always the distinct register of the village elders, of the story-tellers, of the shamans, etc. All these registers interact with each other all the time and co-exist in perfect harmony. When there is the tradition of the written language alongside the spoken, the incessant dialectical interaction between different registers of these two aspects cannot be ignored. In fact, it is this dialectics that is responsible for all communicational praxis and all development or changes in language. It is obvious that if a linguist has to take into account this highly complex dialectics of different registers, his task of describing a language becomes extremely difficult but by closing one's eyes, the cat does not run away. What do we gain by restricting ourselves to only one register confined to a very limited domain of linguistic praxis? The kinds of descriptions

that modern descriptive or generative linguistics produces serve no purpose. If for the sake of formulating neat, square rules, we throw away the major part of the linguistic activity, we end up writing descriptions of linguistic data which no speaker recognises as his own. It must be realised that it is in the subtle transformation of registers that all linguistic creativity resides. It is only when the narrator, of oral or written tradition, moves from one level of speech to another, without informing the listener or the reader, that new domains of significations are constituted. There is a certain reunion of the linguistic world and the cultural world. In the words of Merleau-Ponty :

*On pourrait dire, en reprenant une célèbre distinction, que les langages, c'est-à-dire les systèmes de vocabulaire et de syntaxe constitués, les "moyens d'expression" qui existent empiriquement, sont le dépôt et la sédimentation des actes de parole dans lesquels le sens informulé non seulement trouve le moyen de se traduire au dehors, mais encore acquiert l'existence pour soi-même, et est véritablement créé comme sens. Ou encore on pourrait distinguer une parole parlante et une parole parlée. La première est celle dans laquelle l'intention significative se trouve à l'état naissant. Ici l'existence se polarise dans un certain "sens" qui ne peut être défini par aucun objet naturel, c'est au-delà de l'être qu'elle cherche à se rejoindre et c'est pourquoi elle crée la parole comme appui empirique de son propre non-être. La parole est l'excès de notre existence sur l'être naturel. Mais l'acte d'expression constitue un monde linguistique et un monde culturel, il fait retomber à l'être ce qui tendait au-delà. De là la parole parlée qui jouit des significations disponibles comme d'une fortune acquise. À partir de ces acquisitions, d'autres actes d'expression authentique — ceux de l'écrivain, de l'artiste ou du philosophe, — deviennent possibles. Cette ouverture toujours recréée dans la plénitude de l'être est ce qui conditionne la première parole de l'enfant comme la parole*

*de l'écrivain, la construction du mot comme celle des concepts. Telle est cette fonction que l'on devine à travers le langage, qui se réitère, s'appuie sur elle-même, ou qui, comme une vague, se rassemble et se reprend pour se projeter au-delà d'elle-même.*

(Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, 1945, p.229).

As we follow these propositions, we realise that the dialectics of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* is situated within the emerging space of signification. Obviously, modern linguistics did not concern itself with this semiotic space where linguistic discourses are constituted. This is why, a sentence, a purely grammatical construct in isolation, remained throughout its fifty years of history as the highest unit of study, whereas it is the minimum unit in the domain of discursive significance. To speak is to say something, to communicate. Our enunciations are not only supposed to be grammatically correct, they must also be enunciatively integrated in the ongoing communication process. They must form a part of a whole within the enunciative field within which it operates and which is ultimately responsible for its being, for its constitution. To communicate is to constitute a discourse, a discourse which is a conceptual construct. Words and sentences all dissolve in this discourse to constitute a field of signification. The dialectics of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* makes sense only in this context of discursive formation. If there are certain mutations, certain changes, certain variations in the given phonological and semantic structures, the only reason can be the exigencies of the new communication needs. The expression system of language always adheres to the significance, to the content that is supposed to be transmitted.

This is also due to the fact that as Abélard says, nothing subsists indifferently. Every expression depends upon how we abstract, how we perceive things :



*Omnis quippe per abstractionem habitus intellectus rem aliquomodo aliter quam se habet concipit; et si alio modo eam ut se habet attendit, et uix aliquis intellectus de re sensui non subiacente habetur, qui eam in aliquo aliter quam subsistat non concipiat? Per abstractionem autem illos dicimus intellectus qui, uel naturam alicuius forme, absque respectu subiecte materie, in se ipsa speculantur, uel naturam quamlibet indifferenter, absque suorum scilicet individuorum discretione, meditantur. (Tractatus, 70).*

In the constitution of the discursive formation, in the overall context of the conceptual construct that a discourse represents, we are led to two new propositions. Firstly, the individual words or even sentences do not any more function as isolated signifiers in correspondence with already given signifiers or significations. In fact, it is the discourse as a conceptual whole that functions as a highly complex signifier. The different enunciations form a part of the emerging signifier which is represented by the newly constituted field of signification. We enter into an architectonic structuration. At this level, the intonation patterns acquire primacy over other features of phonology, and the enunciative patterns over the features of syntax. The conceptual whole is constituted under the overall impact of a certain problematics, its theme, which encompasses the entire field of articulation. In Buddhist terms of *apoha vāda*, we can say that everything is then understood in terms of the "other", the other that is correlated with it both structurally and conceptually. Whatever significance there is of the specific enunciations, it is due to these conceptual correlations, which as Sartre has stated earlier, are always in a movement of transcendence. To signify is to generate intellection, said Abélard. To signify is to transcend the given, says Sartre. Both these propositions point to the dialectical nature of the linguistic praxis in the constitution of communicational structures. The *parole parlée* and the *parole parlante*, the standard given and the



hesitating living, are always interlocked in this inevitable dialectics. As such, this transcendence is phenomenological. It has a real basis as a point of departure but it is always active and creative. Linguistic creativity is not an external construction. It functions from within, from the parameters which are already there but it transcends the existing linguistic thresholds to create new fields of signification.

These new fields of signification are the linguistic discourses referred to earlier. The words or sentences or even the ensembles of utterances function as the chains in the ongoing communication system. What is being dialectically engaged is the existing field of signification or what is supposed to be existing, for what exists is nothing more than a supposition. Even the Saussurian *langue* is not a fixed concept. It is more like a horizon. It is always there, we observe it, we perceive it, but we never nearly attain it. We can even say the same about the individual realisation of the *parole*, for ultimately, like *langue*, *parole* is also a conceptual notion. These are not empirical realities as is generally considered in modern linguistics. Language as a system is only an approximation, and the individual's *parole* has also no static, describable empirical reality, for within an individual, within the space of his acquisition and articulation of language, there is already at work the incessant dialectical interaction of *langue* and *parole*. There is a continuous, conscious and unconscious effort at transcending the given to constitute new ensembles of enunciations, which together as a whole, as a conceptual construct, as a communicative discourse, constitute the linguistic parameter. Since the acquisition of language is both experiential and accumulative, there is a sort of archaeological space within which the enunciative parameters operate. This acquisition is both linear and non-linear, both syntagmatic and paradigmatic. We move within given time and space, we respond to the immediate needs of our communication, but at the same time, we move back and forth in this space where

imagination and memory play very important part. The so-called signifying ensembles are not always constituted in the strict, visible synchrony ; their constitution is generally quite complex, going beyond the immediate present to the correlatable past. In the domain of significance, the only criterion that matters is the correspondence between different signifiers, the chronological time can never function as a hindrance to the constitution of human discourses. These signifiers emerge from a coextensive field of enunciation. They have no independent entity. In this context, every signifier is related with another signifier, and whatever significance it has or it acquires, is due to this correlation within the space of the ensembles of signifiers. In this interpretation, we follow strictly the Buddhist concept of *apoha vāda* which has its phenomenological beginning, but which acquires conceptual formulation only in the space of correlations, where every object derives its being from the other and vice versa. Consequently, in the Buddhist theory of signification, one can never envisage the construction of conceptual constructs outside this space of imaginary forms and correlative correspondences. Obviously, in this context, the empirical reality and the validity of the significative parameter of the given is ruled out, for these correlations do not occur in a fixed space. This space is in perpetual movement, subjected to perpetual reflection. It is interesting to see here how the eighteenth century French philosopher, Condillac, presents a similar situation :

*C'est donc l'usage des signes, qui facilite l'exercice de la réflexion: mais cette faculté contribue à son tour à multiplier les signes, et par-là elle peut tous les jours prendre un nouvel essor. Ainsi les signes et la réflexion sont des causes, qui se prêtent des secours mutuels, et qui concourent réciproquement à leur progrès... Tous nos besoins tiennent les uns aux autres, et on en pourroit considérer les perceptions comme une suite d'idées fondamentales, auxquelles on*

*raporterait toutes celles qui font parties de nos connoissances. Au dessus de chacune s'éleveroient d'autres suites d'idées, qui formeroient des especes de chaînes, dont la force seroit entierement dans l'analogie des signes, dans l'ordre des perceptions, et dans la liaison que les circonstances, qui reunissent quelquefois les idées, les plus disparates, auroient formée. À un besoin est liée l'idée de la chose qui est propre à le soulager; à cette idée est liée celle du lieu ou cette chose se rencontre; à celle-ci, celle des personnes qu'on y a vues ; à cette dernière, les idées des plaisirs ou des chagrins qu'on a reçus, et plusieurs autres... les différentes chaînes ou chaînons, que je suppose au dessus de chaque idée fondamentale, seroient, liés par la suite des idées fondamentales, et par quelques anneaux qui seroient vraisemblablement communs à plusieurs ; car les mêmes objets, et par conséquent les mêmes idées se rapportent souvent à diférens besoins. Ainsi de toutes nos connoissances, il ne se formeroit qu'une seule et même chaîne dont les chaînons se réuniroient a certain anneaux, pour se séparer à d'autres. (Condillac, 1796 (1981), p.212).*

Condillac insists on the correlation of what he calls "fundamental ideas" for the constitution of the discursive chain, which as we follow his analysis in this quotation and the subsequent discussion, is the veritable existential chain based on memory and imagination. There are in fact several layers of this conceptual correspondence and the discursive chain as such does not, at any point, respect the linear sequential movement in time. Following the needs of the correlation of ideas, there is an incessant transcendence even though this transcendence takes place within specific time, hence the phenomenological characteristic of the constitution of the chain. The "usage" and "reflection" are the two basic factors responsible for the "multiplication" of the sign-ideas. The given, the *parole parlée* is nothing more than a point of departure, even a point of reference to be more precise. It is a directing horizon, that the individual,



as a member of a linguistic community, is supposed to follow, or rather, is supposed to be conscious of, when he is engaged in the dialectical process of creating new fields of signification. The complexity of this communicational praxis is due to the fact that generally speaking, most of the time, it continues to operate without the individual being necessarily conscious of it. The interlocutors keep on organising and reorganising the semantic features of the variables and the conceptual constitution of the ideological discourses. In *Elémens d'idéologie*, 1817, the renowned follower of Condillac, Destutt de Tracy, states that on the one hand, we need of have personal experience of the ideological field of the signs being used, and on the other, it is obvious that no one can have this extensive experience. These signs are constantly used by different persons in different contexts, thereby constantly modifying their significance, which is not a part of the perception of all those who are involved in a given communication system. It can be generally said that a sign is perfect for the one who invents it, but remains always vague and uncertain for the one who receives it. It is with this imperfection that the exchange of signs takes place... If all men, at all times, perceived the same rapport, in the same manner, it could be a simple problem. In reality, it is not so. Without being conscious of it, men perceive things in different manners, in different relationships, in different orders. No wonder, asserts Destutt de Tracy, there are misunderstandings, and consequently, we neither agree with others now, nor with those with whom we agreed earlier. In other words, the discursive formations are in perpetual movement. The linguistic praxis does not operate within a synchronic space which is static, which can easily be circumscribed within an empirically describable whole. As linguists, we can ignore this linguistic dynamicity at our own peril, at the risk of presenting the so-called reality that is only supposed to be so by a very deceptive comprehension of linguistics.



Commenting upon contemporary sociology in the United States, Jean-Paul Sartre observes that its functionalism deals with a whole, a structure that is already made. It ignores the most fundamental characteristic of Dialectics and History that it is a real movement of unity that is in the process of being acquired :

*...au mouvement de totalisation dialectique on substitute des totalités actuelles. Cela implique naturellement un refus de la dialectique et de l'Histoire, dans la mesure justement où la dialectique n'est d'abord que le mouvement réel d'une unité en train de se faire et non l'étude, même "fonctionnelle" et "dynamique", d'une unité déjà faite.*

(Sartre, 1960, p.51).

This dialectics in movement is the basic problematics that concerns us here the most. When we deal with the dialectics of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante*, we refer to this fundamental concept of dialectics underscored by Sartre. All creativity depends upon this movement and on the basic assumption that we are not dealing with ready-made structures but the ensembles of elements which are perpetually in the process of being structured. This was also the crux of the debate within the dynamic dialectics of the Buddhist *apoha vāda* where the cognition of objects was not a foregone conclusion. The cognitive process was considered a phenomenological process of perpetual construction of images and conceptual constructs. Naturally such a dynamic view where the truth was considered to be conceptualised in the present, in the dialectics of "this" and "that" or of the "being" and the "other", was not favoured by those Indian realists for whom the truth had already been realised. The same paradox was historically repeated when the Abélardian concept of the signification being generated in the very act of the signifying process landed him in trouble with the authorities for whom the signification was already a sacrosanct historical fact. The very vague

distinction between synchrony and diachrony made by Saussure led modern linguistics to the same impasse. Defying all empirical reality, synchronic structures are considered to be static states of language which are yearning to be described in their functional roles and dynamic structurations. But as Sartre has pointed out, in this process we ignore both dialectics and history. We create artificial boundaries of time and space, within which, like in the scientific laboratories, we analyse structures under conditions which have no correspondence with the communication in the real, empirical world, which is always in movement, whose structures are constantly being constituted under the exigencies of the dialectics of the given and the living, of the static and the dynamic.

The anthropologists present us with the structures of kinship but do not show us how they function. These structures are what is supposed to be, what is expected, but each household, each family "lives" its own kinship structure which has to face the upheavals of each new generation. Even in the most "cold" societies, there is a movement. Conflict is an inbuilt part of every system. If we do not deal with these conflicts and their resolutions, we consider structures as frozen structures, as immovable totalities. In this perspective, we not only ignore dialectics and history, but life itself. We have to realise that the negotiating process between *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* is not only continuous but it is also inevitable. At the formal level, the things change much more slowly. The manifest, formal aspect gives the impression of stability but as it is a part of the historical movement, it is continuously being undermined at the immanent level. The votaries of *parole parlée* emphasize the formal aspect. This is why, in the Indian tradition, the Realists were concerned most with the formal description of language, its phonology and grammar, and etymology ; in other words, its standardisation. The Buddhist thinkers, on the other hand, were preoccupied with signification, with the emerging conceptual constructs. Hence they concentrated primarily on the theory of signification, the

*apoha vāda*, where beginning with the phenomenological perceptions, they tried to understand the constitution of the images of the unstable, impermanent reality and their conceptual formations in an incessant dialectical activity of comparisons and parallel correspondences in the dichotomy of our universe. They realised that signification can be approached only in the space of dialectical praxis, in the space of the continuous interpretation of the truth. In spite of the different circumstances and different historical and intellectual contexts, we follow a very similar, though certainly not identical, engagement in the French tradition, from Abélard to Merleau-Ponty. Abélard's emphasis on the "generation of signification", Condillac's preoccupation with "usage and reflection", Merleau-Ponty's presentation of the dialectics of *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* delineate a corresponding intellectual lineage, which is typologically very significant.

## REFERENCES

### DIGNĀGA

1. Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself as subject, *svābhāsa*, and that of the object, *viśayābhāsa*. The cognising of itself as possessing these two appearances or the self-cognition, *svasaṃvitti*, is the result of the cognitive act. Why? Because the determination of the object, *artha niścaya*, conforms with it. (from Dignāga, on perception, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, trans. Masaaki Hattori, Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 28).
2. When a cognition possessing the form of an object is itself the object to be cognised, then, in accordance with the nature of the self-cognition, one conceives that secondary object as something either desirable or undesirable. When on the other hand, only an external thing is considered to be the object, then the means of cognising it is simply the cognition's having the form of the object. For, in this case, we overlook the true nature of the cognition as that



which is to be cognised by itself, and claim that its having the form of a thing is our means of knowing that thing. Why? Because we may say of the thing that it is known only through this. Whatever form of a thing appears in the cognition, as, for example, something white or non-white, it is an object in that form which is cognised. Then it should be understood that the roles of the means of cognition, *pramāṇa*, and of the object to be cognised, *prameya*, corresponding to differences of aspects of the cognition, are only metaphysically attributed, *upacāryate*, to the respective distinctive factor in each case, because in their ultimate nature all elements of existence, being instantaneous, are devoid of function. (*Ibid.*, p.29).

#### DHARMAKĪRTI

1. Direct cognition of an object in the form of a perceptive judgement is possible, i.e., the object is really being cognised, owing to the co-ordination of an image with a point of external reality and its contrast with correlative images... The senses, indeed, and the object which together produce in us an indefinite sensation are not equal to the task of determining it as an awareness of the presence in us of a self-conscious image of something blue. But as soon as we become aware of its similarity with other blue object and its contrast with every thing non-blue, it then can be determined as a self-conscious image of what it is. (from *Nyāya-bindu* by Dharmakīrti with a commentary by Dharmottara, trans. F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Volume II, Delhi reprint, 1984, 15.16-17).
2. Therefore what we call negative experience is this object, the substratum itself appearing as part of the same cognition, and the cognition of such a substratum. Because on the basis of this perceived substratum and of the cognition we arrive at the judgement on the absence of an object which is being imagined as perceived in all normal conditions of a possible experience. (*Ibid.*, 28.20)

#### ABELARD

1. Nouns and verbs have double signification, of things and of intellections, for they signify things in instituting intellections, orienting towards a nature or a

property of the thing. However, the principal signification is that of intellection, *intellectus*. The world of things is accompanied by the world of intellections which enables us to comprehend it. This mental world enlarges the real in the sense where each intellection has for its object a nature or a property present in the thing. On the other hand, it goes beyond it, for a word or an expression can also generate intellection of what does not exist or what does not exist any more. It all depends upon the mode of conceiving the objects, *modus concipiendi*. The study of the propositions shows us that the real may present aspects which are irreducible to things, to the state of things, which are expressed by the so-called *dicta propositionum* which can neither be assimilated to things nor to intellections ... (Abélard in *Sup Per* 366,13).

2. Universality should neither be attributed to things nor to *voces* but to *sermones*. The *sermo*, the name, is instituted by man, while *vox* is the creation of nature. In its being, *in essentia*, it is identical with *sermo*, but this identity is of the order of a stone and a statue. One can attribute it to the latter without attributing it to the former, which as a thing is necessarily individual... Universal is a human creation... *Sup Proph* III, 518,9.
3. To say that the words are of human origin is to insist on their non-substantial character, it is also to emphasize the fact that neither genres nor species are things. This derealisation of the universal is essential to the doctrine of Abélard. But it must also be noted that expelled from the domain of things, it is not reduced to arbitrariness. It is the sign of a nature, of a *status*. By defining the universal as a word (*vox* or *sermo*), Abélard plays a double role in philosophy. On the one hand, by the derealisation of genres and species, reducing them to the signs of natural states, he opens a line of enquiry in the direction of the study of signification and abstraction, on the other, he emphasizes the formalisation of logic and raises questions of language around the problems of meta-language... (*Ibid.*, II,27-35).

## CONDILLAC

1. C'est donc l'usage des signes qui facilite l'exercice de la réflexion: mais cette faculté contribue à son tour à multiplier les signes, et par là elle peut tous les jours prendre un nouvel essor. Ainsi les signes et la réflexion sont des causes,

qui se prêtent des secours mutuels, et qui concourent réciproquement à leur progrès. (from Condillac, *Traité de l'art de penser*, 1796, Vrin reprint, 1981, p. 227).

2. L'obscurité et la confusion viennent de ce qu'en prononçant les mêmes mots, nous croyons nous accorder à exprimer les mêmes idées; quoique d'ordinaire les uns ajoutent à une idée complexe des idées partielles qu'un autre en retranche. De là il arrive que différentes combinaisons n'ont qu'un même signe, et que les mêmes mots ont dans différentes bouches et souvent dans la même des acceptions bien différentes. D'ailleurs, comme l'étude des langues, avec quelque peu de soin qu'elle se fasse, se laisse pas de demander quelque réflexion, on coupe court, et on rapporte les signes à des réalités, dont on n'a point d'idées. Tels sont dans le langage de bien des philosophes, les termes d'être, de substance, d'essence etc. (*Ibid.*, p.289).

#### MERLEAU-PONTY

1. Le monde perçu n'est pas seulement mon monde. C'est en lui que je vois se dessiner les conduites d'autrui, elles la visent elles aussi et il est le corrélatif, non seulement de ma conscience, mais encore de toute conscience que je puisse rencontrer. (from Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, 1945, p.390).
2. Si la parole présupposait la pensée, si parler c'était d'abord se joindre à l'objet par une intention de connaissance ou par une représentation, on ne comprendrait pas pourquoi la pensée tend vers l'expression comme vers son achèvement, pourquoi l'objet le plus familier nous paraît indéterminé tant que nous n'en avons pas retrouvé le nom, pourquoi le sujet pensant lui-même est dans une sorte d'ignorance de ses pensées tant qu'il ne les pas formulés pour soi ou même dites et écrites...(*Ibid.*, p.206).
3. Ainsi, la parole, chez celui qui parle, ne traduit pas une pensée déjà faite, mais l'accomplit. A plus forte raison faut-il admettre que celui qui écoute reçoit la pensée de la parole elle-même. (*Ibid.*, p.207).
4. Il suffit qu'ils (les mots) existent pour moi et qu'ils constituent un certain champ d'action tendu autour de moi. De la même manière, je n'ai pas besoin de me



représenter le mot pour le savoir et pour le prononcer...Il suffit que j'en possède l'essence articulaire sonore comme l'une des modulations, l'un des usages possibles de mon corps. Je me reporte au mot comme ma main se porte vers le lien de mon monde linguistique, il fait partie de mon équipement, je n'ai qu'un moyen de me le représenter, c'est de la prononcer, comme l'artiste n'a qu'un moyen de se représenter l'oeuvre à laquelle il travaille: il faut qu'il la fasse. (*Ibid.*, p.210).

5. D'abord la parole n'est pas le "signe" de la pensée, si l'on entend par là un phénomène qui en annonce un autre comme la fumée annonce le feu. La parole et la pensée n'admettraient cette relation extérieure que si elle étaient l'une et l'autre thématiquement données; en réalité elles sont enveloppées l'une dans l'autre, le sens est pris dans la parole et la parole est l'existence extérieur du sens. (*Ibid.*, p.212).
6. La pensée n'est rien d' "intérieur", elle n'existe pas hors du monde et hors des mots. Ce qui nous trompe là-dessus, ce qui nous fait croire à une pensée qui existerait pour soi avant l'expression, ce sont les pensées déjà constituées et déjà exprimées que nous pouvons rappeler à nous silencieusement et par lesquelles nous nous donnons l'illusion d'une vie intérieure. Mais en réalité ce silence prétendu est bruisant de parole, cette vie intérieure est un langage intérieur. La pensée "pure" se réduit à un certain vide de la conscience, à un vœu instantané. L'intention significative nouvelle ne se connaît elle-même qu'en recouvrant de significations déjà disponibles, résultat d'actes d'expression antérieurs. Les significations disponibles s'entrelacent soudain selon une loi inconnue, et une fois pour toutes un nouvel être culturel a commencé d'exister. La pensée et l'expression se constituent simultanément, lorsque notre acquis culturel se mobilise au service de cette loi inconnue, comme notre corps soudain se prête à un geste nouveau dans l'acquisition de l'habitude. La parole est un véritable geste et elle contient son sens comme le geste contient le sien. (*Ibid.*, pp.213-214).
7. Le sens du geste ainsi "compris" n'est pas derrière lui, il se confond avec la structure du monde que le geste dessine et que je reprends à mon compte, il s'étale sur le geste lui-même, - comme, dans l'expérience perceptive, la signification de la cheminée n'est pas au-delà du spectacle sensible et de la cheminée

elle-même telle que mes regards et mes mouvements la trouvent dans le monde. Le geste linguistique comme tous les autres, dessine lui-même son sens. (*Ibid.*, p.217).

8. Il n'y a donc pas a la rigueur de signes conventionnels, simple notation d'une pensée pure et claire pour elle-même, il n'y a que des paroles dans lesquelles se contracte l'histoire de toute une langue, et qui accomplissent la communication sans aucune garantie, au milieu d'incroyable hasards linguistiques. (*Ibid.*, p.219).
9. Le geste phonétique réalise, pour le sujet parlant et pour ceux qui l'écotent, une certaine structuration de l'expérience, une certaine modulation de l'existence, exactement comme un comportement de mon corps investit pour moi et pour autrui les objets qui m'entourent d'une certaine signification. Le sens du geste n'est pas contenu dans le geste comme phénomène physique ou physiologique. Le sens du mot n'est pas contenu dans le mot comme son. Mais c'est la définition du corps humain de s'approprier dans une série indéfinie d'actes discontinus de noyaux significatifs qui dépassent et transfigurent ses pouvoirs naturels...Il faut donc reconnaître comme un fait dernier cette puissance ouverte et indéfinie de signifier, -c'est-à-dire à la fois de saisir et de communiquer un sens, - par laquelle l'homme se transcende vers un comportement nouveau ou vers autrui ou vers sa propre pensée à travers son corps et sa parole. (*Ibid.*, pp.225-226).
10. Il n'y a pas une signification unique de l'histoire, ce que nous faisons a toujours plusieurs sens, et c'est en quoi une conception existentielle de l'histoire se distingue du matérialisme comme du spiritualisme. (*Ibid.*, p.202).

## Abélardian Tradition of Semiotics

### Abélard, Condillac, Merleau-Ponty

“Ces amants célèbres et malheureux, en un sens le premier couple “moderne” celui qui a préféré la passion “pure” à toutes les formes de l’embourgeoisement...”

(M. Gandillac, *Oeuvres choisies d’Abélard*, Paris, 1945, p.5).

“Il est la première grande figure d’intellectuel moderne - dans les limites de la modernité du XIIe siècle - c’est le premier professeur.”

(Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au moyen âge*, Paris, 1960, p.40).

Abélard rentre en triomphateur et s’établit sur la montagne Sainte-Genviève. Le sort est jeté. La culture parisienne aura pour centre à jamais non l’Ile de la cité mais la montagne, mais la Rive Gauche : un homme a fixé, cette fois, le destin d’un quartier.”

(*Ibid.*, p. 42).

“L’Université de Paris est au moyen âge la grande école de l’Europe. Or, l’homme qui par ses qualités et par ses défauts, par la hardiesse de ses opinions, l’éclat de sa vie, la passion innée de la polémique et un rare talent d’enseignement, concourut le plus à accroître et à répandre le goût des études et ce mouvement intellectuel d’où est sortie au treizième



siècle l'Université de Paris, cet homme est Pierre Abélard .”(Victor Cousin, *Philosophie du moyen âge*, Paris, 1866, p.1).

“We have in France a monk without regulation, a preacher without solicitations, an abbot without discipline, a serpent who moves around in his cavern... This persecutor of our beliefs, an outsider, a heretic, is surrounded by a crowd of innocent people, he reasons on our beliefs in the streets and the squares, seduces children and women, and signs with his plume the most detested heresies on our sacred dogmas.”

(Saint Bernard in a letter to the Pope, in *Huit siècles de violence au Quartier Latin*, André Coutin (ed.), Stock, Paris, 1969, p. 30).

“The teaching is an affair of the youth. The students have the right to choose their own masters and they have the right to accept or criticise them. Knowledge is discovered and elaborated progressively, and none has the monopoly of verity.”

(*Ibid.*, p.31).

“I am struggling to discover the truth, not to show arrogance, I do not dispute like a sophist, I examine reason like a philosopher, and above all, I am in search of the salvation of my soul.”

(Abélard in *Dialogue*, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1993, p. 66).

“Saint Augustine exercised a cardinal influence on all speculation from the earliest to the last phase of medieval thought. From him, more than from any other authority, sprang the pronounced Realism that persisted into modern times. In the eleventh century there appeared a new view of knowledge that conflicted with the spiritual theory of Augustine and with his Neo-Platonic Realism. The first and foremost critic of the older tradition was Peter Abaelard...”

(M.H. Carré, *Realists and Nominalists*, Oxford, 1946, p.vi).

“Abailard’s treatment of mental images (as we now refer to the likenesses of ‘imaginary forms’) is extraordinary and has, so far as I know, no precedent in Western philosophy.”

(Martin M. Tweedale, *Abailard on Universals*, North-Holland, 1976, p.187).

“Abelard’s treatment of the problem of universals was really decisive, in the sense that it gave a death-blow to ultra-realism by showing how one could deny the latter doctrine without at the same time being obliged to deny all objectivity to genera and species...The foundation of the Thomist doctrine of moderate realism had thus been laid before the thirteenth century, and indeed we may say that it was Abelard who really killed ultra realism. When St Thomas declares that universals are not subsistent things but exist only in singular things, he is re-echoing what Abelard and John of Salisbury (a student of Abelard) had said before him.”

(Frederick Copleston in *A History of Philosophy*, Kent, 1950, Vol. II. pp. 151-153).

Pierre Abélard, Petrus Abaelardus, (1070-1142) thus played the role of a precursor in a number of domains. For Gandillac, Abélard and Héloïse represent the first modern couple who followed their “pure passion” and shunned the temptations of bourgeoisie. Jacques Le Goff considers him to be the first “professor” of modernity, and the one who, once for all, fixed the destiny of the Left Bank, the Latin Quarter, as the Cultural Centre of Paris as against the religious hub of Ile de la Cité. For Victor Cousin, Abélard is the real founder of the University of Paris in every sense of the term - academic, revolutionary, the lieu of all contestations. In fact, Abélard did much more than dislocating symbolically the intellectual mental space by crossing over to the montagne Sainte Geneviève. As Carré, Tweedale and Copelston have

pointed out, Abélard administered a veritable epistemological cut in the Western tradition since Augustine. By dialectically negotiating a middle path between the two extremes of Neo-Platonic Realism and Aristotelian Nominalism, Abélard not only established for ever the montagne Sainte Geneviève as the cultural centre of France but also laid down the philosophical space of French tradition which has always avoided the extremes of Anglo-Saxon empiricism and Germanic idealist metaphysics.

Abélard's theory of signification has been denominated as *Conceptualism* by Victor Cousin<sup>1</sup> and *Non-Realism* by Jean Jolivet<sup>2</sup>, and by various other epithets by other commentators, but all scholars of medieval studies agree that if Abélard criticised Neo-Platonic Realism, he did not fall into the trap of Nominalism of the order of later thinkers like William Occam. And, I intend to demonstrate in this paper that this Abélardian intellection on the nature of signification or semiotics later became the distinctive feature of all French philosophical meditations, the two most important landmarks being Condillac in the eighteenth century and Merleau-Ponty in modern times. All these thinkers laid heavy emphasis on language as the most significant lieu of reflection and articulation. This is the phenomenology of language which is neither stuck in its stark materiality nor it is lost in the extreme ambiguity of ideal spiritualism. The historian of linguistic thought, Sylvain Auroux, has already described the enterprise of Condillac in Abélardian terms by stating that instead of nominalism, one should designate the doctrine of Condillac as a *linguistic conceptualism*.<sup>3</sup> We have also the testimony of Herman Parret who states that the Cartesian paradigm and the Condillacian paradigm represent important variations within the classical episteme. The question of the relation of language with thought depends upon the way one considers language as expression or as articulation of thought. The Port Royal Grammar is an amended logic, a speculative



metaphysics, while the Grammar of Condillac is a true philosophy of language, a new metaphysics. The interest shown for Locke in this opposition is due to the fact that the Lockinian semiotics is not a semiology as that of Condillac. The mentalism of Locke, even though it is framed within the empiricist epistemology, cannot correspond to a conception of language constitutive of knowledge and reason. In Condillac, language dominates: there is nothing but language, there is nothing outside language except its articulatory force<sup>4</sup> ... And, in modern times, for Merleau-Ponty, every thought comes (is derived) from the words and to the words, it returns; every word is born in a thought and ends in it.<sup>5</sup> The word and the thought that it designates should not be considered as two external terms... the word carries its signification as the body is the incarnation of a comportment.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the signified is not in the signifier as the pearl is in its shell. It should be recognised as the fundamental fact of expression that there is always a certain surpassing of the signifier by the signified. The significance emerges as much from the secret and masked relations between the signifying units as from the units themselves. Every expression is only provisionally fixed; provisionally, for the signified like the signifier is inscribed in the indefinite movement of differentiation and articulation, which characterises the thinking thought, thought in praxis, *pensée pensante*, and the speaking speech, speech in praxis, *parole parlante*.<sup>7</sup>

We can now describe the theories of signification of these thinkers in chronological order. For Abélard there are primarily six modes of signification :

1. By imposition. The word, man, signifies mortal rational animal, for this signification is imposed on the word, man. The signification is thus due to human or cultural fact.
2. By determination. Rational or man referring to the substances whose predicates they are, also determine the characteristics

of rationality. This is why Aristotle states in his *Categories* that the genre and species determine a quality with reference to a substance, a substance on which their names are imposed because of a given quality.

3. By generation. The intellection constituted in the word pronounced generates a similar intellection for the one who hears it.
4. By negation. A thing designated by a definite noun is in a way signified by an indefinite word. The word, non-man, attributed to an object because it is not a man, signifies in a way also the notion of man. It may signify many other things not covered by the word, man.
5. By adjunction. The name Socrates, signifies also a number of his accidental characteristics. The barking of a dog refers to its anger.
6. By consecution. When I say that I am his father, it is understood that he is my son. The signification is created within a relational space of reciprocity and simultaneity.

It is in the discussion of the nature of universals that we follow the development of Abélardian theory of signification. The problematics revolves around the relation between the signifier and the signified, the word and the thing, and its numerous implications for the general theory of semiotics. To signify or to designate is the function of words, to be signified is that of the things. A universal is that which by nature can serve as a predicate of several subjects, a singular, which cannot. It seems that both words and things can be considered as universals, one has to see how the definition of universal can be applied to things. Abélard states that some thinkers attribute universality to things by arguing that there is essentially the same substance in things which are different only

in form. If we take away the forms, there would be no difference in things. The difference lies in form or accidents and not in essence. There is the same substance of man which becomes here Plato, there, Socrates, due to their respective accidents.

Abélard argues that this theory does not stand the test of “physics”. Suppose that there is in fact a being essentially the same, even though it appears in different forms, exists in different subjects. It must follow that the thing that is within this form be the same in another form. For example, an animal inhabited by rationality be also the animal inhabited by irrationality, thus the rational animal is at the same time, the irrational animal ; as such the two contraries exist in the same subject. Moreover, they will not really be contrary as they would co-exist in the same absolutely identical essence. In fact, the contraries cannot be together in the same subject, even under different rapports, as it is the case with relational and other attributes.

These contraries are presented by some thinkers under different perspectives by stating that one should not formulate the proposition : the rational animal is irrational animal. A being can be rational from a certain point of view and irrational from another, the forms which correspond to the same subject are no more opposing forms. And, one does criticise propositions such as “rational and mortal animal” or “white animal and animal that walks”, for man is not mortal inasmuch as he is rational or he is white inasmuch as he walks. The one and the same animal can have two properties under different rapports.

Then we come to the Aristotelian theory of ten essences or ten most general genres, for in each case we find the same essence diversified only due to different forms. Thus substances are absolutely the same beings. The same is true of all qualities and all quantities. The realities signified by Socrates and Plato are absolutely the same for essentially



they are no more different than the substances to which they are attached as the quality of Socrates and the quality of Plato, for both are qualities. They do not differ from each other in the nature of their qualities or the nature of their substances as the essence of their substance is the same.

Abélard refutes this theory. First of all, why should one restrict oneself only to ten essences. There can be more or less. And, how can we perceive a numerical multiplicity in substances if only the forms are different? We do not consider Socrates as numerically multiple just because he may have multiple forms. Another affirmation that does not stand the test of verity is the statement that the individuals are made by their proper accidents. If the individuals derive their being from their accidents, the accidents should precede them. If man differs from other species because of the difference in form, the individual named, Socrates, is distinguished by his accidents. Socrates thus cannot exist without his accidents nor man without his differences. Socrates is not the substratum of his accidents. If the accidents are not in the individual substances, they are not in the universal substances also. The theory that states that an absolutely identical essence is found simultaneously in different beings is illogical, asserts Abélard.

There are others who have a slightly better theory of universality when they state that the individuals do not differ from each other only due to their forms, they are also individually distinct in their very essence. Matter and form are both different in every individual. Even if the forms are suppressed, their individual distinctions stay because of the diversity of essences. But there is an impasse, for the theory of universality is not discarded in this case. It is argued that the distinct beings are the same beings, not by essence but by non-difference. Thus the individual men are distinct from each other but they have the same being in man. They do not differ in the nature of humanity. This universality is due to this non-difference.

Abélard continues to present the divergent views within this doctrine of non-difference. There are some thinkers, he says, who perceive this universal element in the collection constituted of several elements. For them, Socrates and Plato by themselves do not represent a species, but all men taken together constitute the species, man, and all animals together form a genre. A certain unity is attributed to this collectivity, for without this, one cannot have a predicate of several individuals. A universal thing will not have multiple subjects and the universals will not be as numerous as the singulars. As such, Socrates inasmuch as he is a man is dissociated from himself as Socrates. He cannot be his own genre or his own species if he is not in one way or the other different from himself, for the relative terms must oppose each other.

Abélard thus refutes this theory of collection. How can a collection of men taken together as one species be a predicate of several subjects and thus be universal while taken in its totality we do not attribute it to subjects taken one by one. If we accept that there is a predicate of different subjects according to its parts, it has nothing to do with the community of the universals, which according to Boethius, should entirely be in each subject. It is this that distinguishes it from the common base, which following its parts, is like a field whose different parts belong to different masters. We could then attribute the predicate, Socrates, to several subjects which would be his different parts, and he would himself be universal. Moreover, we will have to consider a universal any plurality of men put together. Similarly, we will make a unique universal substance from any collection of bodies and souls, and in that case, the entire collection of substances will be one of the most general genres. In fact, argues Abélard, if one of the substances is subtracted, the remaining collection is not the most general genre while it is a universal substance. It must be a species of the genre of substance and should have a species which corresponds to it under the same genre. A part is not identical

with the whole but the species is always identical with the genre. How can then the entire collection of men be equivalent to an ensemble of animals?

Finally, Abélard presents the theory of those who consider individuals as universals inasmuch as they correspond with others, and accept that they are predicates of several subjects not because they are essentially multiple, but because these multiple subjects correspond with them. But argues Abélard, if to be predicated of multiple subjects is equivalent to corresponding with these multiple, how can we say that the predicate individual is accorded to another that is isolated? How the fact of being predicate of several subjects distinguishes the universal from the singular? For, man, inasmuch as he is a man, corresponds with several subjects, but neither man, inasmuch as he is Socrates, nor Socrates inasmuch as he is Socrates, corresponds with others. Man in Socrates and Socrates himself do not differ from each other. Nothing can be different from itself. This is why Socrates as white and Socrates as grammarian, even though with two different characteristics, is not different from himself, for he is not a grammarian in a way that he is not himself, nor when he is considered white. When they say that Socrates and Plato correspond with each other in "man", how can we believe this, for it is certain that all men are different from each other in matter and in form.

It is obvious that the things, whether they are taken one by one or together, cannot be considered universals, i.e. predicates of several subjects. Thus we must attribute this universality, argues Abélard, to words alone. The grammarians consider some nouns as "appellative", others, "proper". Similarly, for the dialecticians, some simple terms are "universals", others, "particulars", or "singulars". The universal is a vocable that is instituted to serve as a predicate of several subjects taken separately, as the noun, man, that one can join with specific men due to



the nature of the real subjects to whom it is attributed. The singular is that which can be a predicate of any one subject, like Socrates.

After presenting and refuting different theories of Realism from the extreme Realism of Augustine to the various modifications of *non-difference, essentialism, collectivism, correspondence*, etc., prevalent at the end of the eleventh century, Abélard squarely situates the discussion within the theoretical space of language and dialectics. Ultimately, it is an affair of the nature of signification, the relation between the signifier and the signified. It is the problem of language par excellence. According to Abélard, apart from the proper nouns, all other words of language which refer to nature, essence, being of an object, animate or inanimate, are imposed by man for a variety of reasons, which is not only the problematics of signification but also and primarily that of the very creative process in which man is engaged as a cultural being. It is also the problematics of communication, of understanding and of misunderstanding, of the constitution of the text and of the reader's understanding of the intellection generated therein.

Abélard states that the relation of "construction" that is the concern of the grammarians is different from "predication" that the dialecticians deal with. In correspondence with the property of the construction, words such as "man" and "stone", or any other word in nominative case, can be connected with the verb "to be" as well as "animal" and "man", as long as it is a matter of expressing an idea, and not of designating a real status. Thus the relation with construction is always valid when it refers to a complete significance, whether in reality it is so or not. But the relation with predication concerns the nature of things and must adhere to the reality of things. When we say, "man is a stone", the construction is valid ; grammatically, it is correct. However, this construction is logically incorrect and this predication is not allowed. When we talk about the universals, we are in the domain of dialectics and predication. The modern

American linguistics of the so-called Chomskian revolution is thus ruled out in Abélardian theory of signification. For Abélard, a sentence must not only be grammatically but also logically correct. The universal word is never the same thing as the appellative noun, neither the singular as the proper noun. They are more or less the same for one or the other. Appellative and proper nouns not only include the nominative but also the oblique which cannot be predicated and are excluded from playing any role when we define the universal by its being predicated. All appellative or proper nouns are not necessarily universal or singular, for the universals are not only nouns but also verbs and indefinite nouns.

The word, man, designates individual men for the denominator that is common to all, i.e. they are men. Individual men, distinct from each other, differ due to their proper essence and their form. However, they correspond to or encounter each other in that they are men. This does not imply that they correspond to "in man", for man is nothing if not individual, but "in being-man". The being-man or the being of man is not a man or a thing, similar is the case with "not being in a subject" or "not being susceptible of a contradiction". The correspondence is not "in" a thing. Socrates and Plato resemble each other "in being-man" just as a horse and a donkey correspond "in not being-man". We call "state of man" this "being-man" which is not a thing, it is due to a common reason that a name is given to individual men. Generally, what is not a thing is called a cause. We say, he was beaten because he did not want to go to the public square. "He did not want to go to the public square" is a cause, it is not an essence. We can also call, "state of man", the thing placed in the nature of man. The one who imposed this word man, "conceived a common resemblance", which is neither a thing nor an essence.

Abélardian theory of signification is further crystallised in *Logica Nastrorum*<sup>10</sup> where he makes a distinction between *vox* and *sermo*. The universals are neither things nor sounds, *voces*, they are due to *sermones*

which may be singular or universal. A noun or a term is due to human institution but a thing or a sound is due to nature. The signifying act is thus a human fact, a cultural fact, as opposed to the physical aspect of the word that is purely natural. Abélard compares this phenomenon with the creative act. A stone and a statue are one and the same “thing” but they are derived from different sources. The stone is the work of God (nature) while the statue is the work of man (culture). The *sermones* are universal because they are created by man, they are predicates of several subjects. The sounds and things are not at all universal even if in physical reality *voces* and *sermones* are not different.

Abélard’s theory of signification is presented in an important article by L. M. De Rijk<sup>11</sup> where he distinguishes between Abélard’s views on the signification of words and propositions. To signify, *significare*, with words, *dictiones*, is to generate an intellection in the soul of the hearer. The same is applicable to the denotation of external things and in this case the verb is synonymous with *appellare*, *nominare*, *demonstrare*, *designare*. To signify with complete sentences, *propositiones*, is to generate an intellection which is constituted with the liaison of the intellections with its parts, *dictiones*. For Abélard, the words first signify intellections, then the things, which correspond to them. The words generate intellections and with these we arrive at the knowledge of things. Intellections thus play an intermediary role. We have now to enquire about the exact status of things. For Abélard, the race, *cursus*, and he runs, *currit*, refer to the same things as it is considered in *essentia*, the race, and in *adiacentia*, he runs. Jean Jolivet believes that this linguistic approach is more concerned with the mental activity than with the exact nature of things. This is true if we think only of the external aspect of things. In this case, Abélardian theory is different from that of Aristotle. Aristotle’s emphasis is on the external things and Abélard is primarily interested in the domain of the spirit or the domain of intellections. As



such, we can say that the things signified by words are things as thought of or as produced by intellection. This difference with Aristotle is manifest most clearly in Abélardian theory of the proposition, *propositio*. Even though for Abélard, the signification of a proposition is definite, its signified, *significatum*, is not a thing, it is a sort of a half-thing, *quasi-res*. It depends upon three aspects of the proposition. One may consider it as a verbal phrase, as an intellection expressed by words, or as a thing that is the object of the verbal phrase or the intellection. Abélard states that our expressions have a *consignificatum* rather than a signification so-called, and the task of the proposition is to present a mode of conception, *modus concipiendi*. It does not have a specific content, *in istis nulla imagine nititur intellectus*, but it is derived from it.

The signification of a proposition is further explained by means of the logic of implication, *si rosa est, flos est*. The logic of this necessity lies in the fact that what is stated by the antecedent, *rosa est*, cannot be stated without what is stated by the consequent, *flos est*. If the antecedent is taken either as a grammatical construct or as an act of intellection, it can be without the consequent which can be taken separately as a grammatical or an intellectual construct. On the contrary, the antecedent taken as a fact of logic implies the logical existence of the consequent. This necessity is purely relational, *quidam rerum modus habendi se* and it does not concern the relation between the external aspect of things, nor between intellections taken as psychological or rational acts. It is a relation between the contents of intellections. In other words, these relations are purely logical or formal. The dictum of Abélard is neither an external thing, *res*, nor a mental act as such, but the objectivated content of this act, which being neither a thing nor an act, is called half-thing, *quasi-res*.

In *Dialectica* (II, 150) Abélard states that in the expression *verum est Socratem*, the dictum, *Socratem currere*, is not an incomplete sentence, *oratio imperfecta*, but a quasi noun, *quasi nomen*. And when one writes this proposition in the form, *Socrates currit verum est*, the subject *Socrates currit* is not a proposition but only a noun to which the predicate *vrai* is attributed. In other words, *Socrates currit* does not refer to a real running of a real Socrates. It is a sort of a noun, *quasi nomen*, that provides a content to an empty formulation. It does not have a denotation, but it has a signification. The dictum of the proposition is thus far from being an external thing, *res extra animam*, it is a thing that derives its existence from the soul or intellection, *res in anima*, which we must distinguish from the act of intellection as such, *res in anima subiective*, and recognise its proper identity in the objective content of the intellection. This dictum of the great logician of the twelfth century, believes De Rijk, is of the logical nature par excellence.

For Jean Jolivet there is a paradox in this theory of dictum.<sup>12</sup> What is not a thing not only has a significance but also establishes the rapports of significance. Abélard had considered status in the same manner which without being things are the causes of the imposition of the universal nouns as in the example “he was beaten because he did not want to go to the public square”, is a cause without being an essence. Thus the dictum even if it is not a being, has a consistence. But Jolivet argues that in that case there is another paradox due to its “non-essentiality”; the proposition that signifies it does not constitute an intellection. From the point of view of the psychology of thought, the dictum is beyond conception just as it is beyond things. It can be a subject of a proposition, but taken in itself as in a proposition, *verum est Socratem currere*, the significance is impersonal and no intellection can be constituted.

Initially the word corresponds to an idea and through this idea a correspondence with the object is established. The rapport between the

word and the thing being mediatory is complicated with several aspects of grammar and dialectics. These differences however remain at the level of the analysis of intellection and do not alter the fundamental axiom that the words are meant to designate things. When we come to phrases, the things get more complicated. As the idea takes precedence over the thing and the idea of the thing refers to multiple intellections, the sentence that describes this grouping of words has multiple significations. The distinction between "the significance of things" and "the significance of intellections" is quasi contradictory, for the number of significations is never the same. The thing (object) is one but it is apprehended through a number of intellections. If the words are not the objects of thought, for as signs their function is to direct the spirit of the auditeur towards the things, it is the same for the intellections. We constitute intellections in the spirit of the auditeur and at the same time we take care of the things. Our spirit does not stop at the intellections that our words signify, its veritable aim is to apprehend the things. The intellections then play a mediatory role between the spirit and the world. The word leads to the idea, the idea to the thing, says Abélard<sup>13</sup>. For Abélard, even though what is expressed through a proposition is not a thing yet it is an object. It is, as described earlier, a half-thing, *quasi-res*. He goes as far as to say that it is nothing, *nil omnino*, absolutely nothing, *nullam omnino rem*. It is not an existing thing, *essentia*. It is all due to the fact that the intellections do not have the same status as that of the elements of the proposition, for the proposition is not homogeneous with its parts. In isolation, the noun and the verb signify intellections but these intellections do not constitute others. The intellection that corresponds to a proposition is not an intellection of this given proposition but of the manner in which the thing is apprehended : *oportet per propositiones non dicta intellegi, sed res in intellectu complecti*. This *intellectus compositus* exists at the psychological level. This existence is ambiguous. The words do not disappear even when they are the elements of a proposition. There is a



certain existence but this existence, believes Abélard, tends towards its non-being, to an image of what the proposition expresses. It corresponds with the state of things, but a state does not exist in the strict sense of the term, it is purely mental or psychological. This “non-existing” signified, however, is not less important, for the logical true and false depend upon it. It is also true of the necessity of consequence. In fact, this necessity is neither in the proposition taken in its singular existence, in *essentia*, which is transitory, nor in the intellection, nor even in things, for they can be destroyed without eliminating the necessity of consequence. If the dictum plays this dialectical role, it is precisely because it does not exist ; outside the being, it escapes its becoming. It is thus not a surplus with reference to things and ideas. What it loses on the ontological plane, it gains on the logical plane. All the mechanism of dialectical consequences is developed in this domain, external to both things and ideas. If the necessity is excluded from existence, it is due to the fact that the real is individual, dependent upon time and contingency. We come back to the doctrine of the universal, which is, as argued earlier, not a thing, and which like the dictum, is expressed quasi-nominally by an infinitive proposition. When we say that Socrates and Plato meet in “being-man” or “being-substance”, *Socratem et Platonem convenire in esse hominem vel in esse substantiam*, we cannot, if we remain at the plane of things, *si hoc in rebus accipimus*, designate any thing in which they meet. Being in the thing is not identical with being a thing as being in the house is not the same thing as being a house.

For Abélard, the controversy over universals is above all a problem of language. What does the word, “man”, signify that it can be applied to an individual, say “Socrates”? This simple question is of ontological order. But it also poses a problem of dialectics in the context of predication. What is the content of a universal predicate that is attributed to a given subject. In other words, what is the relationship between the

Sausurrian signifiant and signifié, the fundamental problematics of semiotics.

Once he had presented the extreme complexity of signification with his theory of *dictum propositionis*, Abélard wrote *Sic et Non*, where he juxtaposed the writings of the Fathers and the Doctors of Christianity under specific theological themes and showed how there were contradictions from one ecclesiastic authority to another, and also at times, within the same author. The main purpose was to demonstrate that as the signification of propositions did not correspond to specific things, there were ambiguities in the domain of intellection and the imaginaire where the significations were constituted. The truth of the theological dogmas could not be absolutely definite, for absolutely definite can only be a thing, an individual thing. At the level of ideas, at the level of universals, one enters into the realm of perceptions and imaginary constructs. Abélard tried to justify this variation by saying that it is possible that even the prophets were not always inspired by the Holy Spirit. And with a sense of humour, he stated that as a rich man gives his gold to different artisans to create various ornaments, God inspires authors with various aspects of the Holy Spirit. The ornaments are different but they are all beautiful and add to the splendour of the one who wears them. The ecclesiastic authorities were not amused by this colourful metaphor. They refused to accept multiplicity of interpretations and Abélard was duly excommunicated twice, in 1121, at Soisson, and in 1140, at Sens.

Abélard's theory of signification can be followed in its various details in his theory of knowledge or the theory of creativity based on the tripartite division of *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *intellectus*, presented in *Logica Ingredientibus*.<sup>14</sup> The senses, *sensus*, is a force of soul which is exercised by means of corporeal instruments, touch with hands, vision with eyes and other senses by other parts of body. After senses we have imagination

and not intellection, for with intellection we reason. With reason we are able to distinguish an object and reflect upon it, upon one of its characteristics. This is so when we examine a thing as a thing, or as a substance, corporeal, sensible or coloured, or formulate an idea of one of its properties or natures even when that thing may not exist, as the day of tomorrow or a laughing statue. Imagination and intellection neither need corporeal instruments nor sensible objects, they perceive what is insensible, incorporeal, like soul or paternity. Often our spirit with imagination or intellection examines the nature of things with the help of imaginary forms that it constitutes of its own. For example, the one who is away from Rome cannot see it any more. However, he has in his soul a certain tableau of the city within which he observes the city that is no more there.

If the question is posed whether these imaginary forms are things, the answer would be in the negative. They are neither substances nor the forms supported by substances. If after having seen a tower, I think of it when it is away, or destroyed, this immense tableau, oblong and quadrangular that my spirit constitutes in a way before my eyes, is neither a substance nor a form. Some believe that it is the soul that can provide to itself these forms to express resemblances of things. But the soul is indivisible. How can it represent the length or the breadth or the quantity of the tower when it cannot stretch itself in all these directions? Often the soul thinks of several things at the same time, for it cannot transform itself if it stays in the same state all the time.

Abélard does not agree with Aristotle that these forms are identical with things. The intellection that is a form of the indivisible soul cannot go beyond the possibilities of its subjects to be able to accommodate all things or all forms. These images or simulacres of things that the spirit constitutes to be able to contemplate on the things which are absent are absolutely nothing. As long as the thing is present, we do not need its



image. It can be apprehended through our senses. The imaginary similitude is conceived in the absence of the thing. Abélard says that Plato calls these similitudes, insensible, but amongst these similitudes some are sensible, especially those which are perceived by senses, as that of a given statue, others are insensible, as the simulacres of things which are constituted and offered to thought alone, not to senses. Some assert that they are primarily designated by words. In fact, it is neither due to the similitudes of things nor due to the similitudes of intellections that the words are imposed ; it is rather due to the things themselves and their intellections, to discuss the nature of things and not their images. Some images are constituted to correspond to a given substance, others are common, they refer to a plurality of things. The name "Socrates" presents us with a fixed image, but the word "man" with an image common to all men.

There is no human intellection without imagination. When our spirit begins to think, this application and this beginning of thinking is called imagination. When it aims at a certain nature of a thing, inasmuch as it is a thing, a state, a substance, a body, whiteness, Socrates, it is called intellection. It is led by reason to intellection from the confusion that imagination represents. By imagination we reach at the thing and not its nature. When the thing is present, the three faculties, sense, imagination, intellection are all at work at the same time. But they apprehend a thing in different ways. By senses we see or touch a thing. We do not imagine it or reflect upon it. It happens often that when we are preoccupied with one thing, we also see other things, we feel them in a way. However, the senses apprehend one thing, without, and the spirit thinks of another, within. If now it applies also its thought to what it feels, the first step of this application to the thing felt is imagination, which is common to us along with animals. And when after application, fixing our spirit on one thing excluding all others, we examine rationally a nature or property

that belongs to it, it is intellection. Thus to imagine is to fix our spirit on the thing, to think, is not to aim at the thing itself but at its nature or property. If the thing is not present, we can more easily distinguish between imagination and intellection. Imagination is a perception of the spirit with which we perceive the image of the thing, without distinguishing within it, its natures and properties. When we aim at a nature or a property, we have intellection. It is like if we hold a piece of wood in one hand, and with another, we sculpt or we paint. By intellection we give it a form what we imagined in our imagination. The one who paints begins with a few lines on the space which is still neutral and empty. Then by extending the colours and lines, he begins to give a form to what was first enclosed within the limits of a certain space. Thus what was perceived indistinctly and which was not endowed with any specific property was subjected to intellection without imagination. We must begin with imperfection to arrive at perfection. But the important point here is that the imaginary forms which have no specific reality and which the spirit constitutes for itself before our intellection begins its application, are the basis of all creative activity. These are the forms with which the artists and the artisans, and according to Abélard, also God, deal before the realisation of the creative act. These forms are fictive, they are not only universal, they are beyond all space and time. It is this imaginary form of beauty or truth that enables us to recognise specific things beautiful and true, however different they may be from each other, and to envisage and create things beautiful and true which have not yet been created. It is in a way the phenomenology of transcendence. We begin from specific existing things, the sensuous world, and we transcend this world in the domain of imaginaire to finally constitute intellections in the realm of dialectics and logic. On the relationship between the word and the thing, Abélard states that the signification that the thing bestows on the word, the thing itself does not have. A given statue of Virgin Mary leads us mentally to an imaginary

sublime form of Mary, her innocence, her piety, her motherhood, in a word, a form beyond all specific forms, for there are numerous statues of Mary, all physically different from each other. At the level of *imaginaire*, they are all Marys. At the level of statues, the things, none of them is. In other words, the signification that the statue confers on the signifier, the word, the statue, the thing, does not have. And Abélard is right in asserting that only the words are universals, but not as *voces*, as sounds, but as *sermones*, as signifiers.

Abélard's position is most interesting from the point of view of the artist, the creator, the author. Apart from the physical constraints of carving a young woman, what the artist really creates in the statue of Mary is a certain imaginary form of the divinity and purity which in fact cannot have any form. That is why, for Abélard, this form is ambiguous but it is precisely this ambiguity par excellence that the artists have been exploiting since the beginning of all cultural activity. As there is no definite form of Mary, there will be incessant attempts at creating the imaginary sublime form to which the devotees respond. It is a sort of a formless form that is within a specific form that we can perceive and feel. Abélard emphasizes this distinction between the form without and the form within in the context of senses and imagination. The Abélardian theory of signification or semiotics deals with these forms within.

We must not forget that Abélard was not only a great theoretician of signification, he was also a great poet. The songs he wrote for his beloved, Héloïse, and sung on his harp before his bewitched students were very popular. His interest in the domain of *imaginaire* is also manifest in the Dialogue that he wrote based on a dream where he is visited by a philosopher, a Christian and a Jew. In the extreme fundamentalism of Christian Middle Ages, only Abélard had the courage to argue in this text that the sin is only in intention and not in act. And, as the Jews did not crucify Jesus with bad intention, they did not commit any sin. In his



long poem addressed to his son, Astralabe, Abélard was more rational and revolutionary than most of the philosophers of the so-called enlightened modern times where he told his son that all religions were respectable, it would be difficult to know which is the best. But one need not worry, without interrogating, without any specific reason, one believes in a religion one is born in. This in any case, is not a sin. What is sinful is not to have faith in God. This statement deserves to be quoted in detail<sup>15</sup>:

*Tot fidei sectis divisus mundus habetur  
ut quae sit vitae semita vix pateat  
Quod tot habet fidei contraria dogmata mundus  
Quisque facit generis traditione sui.  
Denique nullus in his retionem consulere audet,  
Dum quacumque sibi vivere pace studet.  
Contemnendo Deum peccat solummodo quisque;  
Nil nisi contemptus hunc facit esse reum.*

In fact, more than his daring relation with Héloïse, more than his opting for Non-Realism, Conceptualism, or middle path, *madhya mārga*, between Platonic Realism and Aristotelian Nominalism (between Germanic Idealism and Anglo-Saxon Empiricism), more than his being the founder of the Left Bank as the Cultural Centre of France, it is this most revolutionary statement in the Dialogue absolving Jews of all sins and this advice to his son to pay equal respect to all religions that establishes Pierre Abélard as the real founder of modernity and French Culture in all its intellectual, philosophical and political dimensions. And, all this happened eight hundred years ago when tortured by repeated excommunications by the most fundamental authorities of the Middle Ages who burnt his books in public, Abélard thought of migrating to more tolerant, heathen, Muslim lands where he could continue his studies of dialectics and theology in peace and tranquillity.

It is also interesting to note that the very life of Abélard and Héloïse has inspired a number of authors to write novels about their adventures. Abélard who literally invented the extraordinary and unique domain of the imaginaire as commented upon by Tweedale, quoted earlier, himself became the subject of that very imaginary space. The author of one such recent novel or fictional biography, Suzanne Bernard, writes<sup>16</sup>:

*Pierre Abélard, qui fut le premier 'intellectuel', de notre histoire, au sens de J.Le Goff, a osé penser, chercher, ouvrir des chemins nouveaux. On le lui a fait payer cher. Par son courage face à la persécution, son obstination à ne jamais renier les valeurs fondamentales auxquelles il avait consacré sa vie, son exemple n'a pas fini de rayonner à travers les siècles.*

*Pendant la sale, la honteuse Guerre du golfe, qui fit des centaines de milliers de victimes, et qui, au lieu de résoudre les problèmes, les a au contraire dramatiquement aggravés, je vécus, en écrivant ce livre, d'étranges rencontres. Pas si loin de nous, malgré les siècles le conflit Abélard-Saint Bernard : d'un cot, Bernard de Clairvaux, intransigeant, fanatique et dominateur, qui célébrait la Guerre Sainte, exaltait le Combat, encourageait les Croisés à tuer et à mourir et qui, en mystique inspiré, entraînait l'adhésion quasi générale à la Guerre, au nom du Droit! De l'autre, une minorité de 'pacifistes' dont Abélard, qui écrivait son "Dialogue entre un Philosophe (un fils d'Ismael), un Juif et un Chrétien" et qui avait même pensé, pour fuir la persécution, se retirer en terre d'Islam.*

In other words, Abélard who was the first intellectual of our history had the courage to think, to search for truth, to open new paths. He had to pay dearly for his choice in the face of persecution. He never abandoned the fundamental values dear to him. His life continues to be an example for all throughout the centuries... While the author was writing this bi-

ography of Abélard, there was the dirty war of the Gulf going on, which solved nothing, which led nowhere. It reminded her of the Abélard-Saint Bernard conflict. On the one side, Saint Bernard, the fanatic crusador who celebrated the holy war and did not tolerate any opposition or difference, and on the other, a number of pacifists like Abélard, who was writing his Dialogue between a philosopher, a Jew and a Christian, and who had even thought of migrating to more tolerant, heathen, Muslim lands to escape persecution to reflect and write in peace.

After this brief introduction to Abélard's theory of language and creativity in terms of *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *intellectus*, we come to the second landmark in the history of ideas in France in the eighteenth century with Condillac whose doctrine of language has been christened "conceptualism", the same nomenclature that is often used to describe Abélardian theory, by the historian of linguistic ideas, Sylvain Auroux.

Certain passages of *L'Art de penser*<sup>17</sup> of Condillac give the impression of almost literal paraphrasing of Abélard's *Logica Ingredientibus*. Our reflection has two objects, says Condillac, the actual sensations and the sensations that we are reminded of. These two mutually interact with each other. As the sensible objects are highly complex, we can compare them only through abstractions. We see what is common to all, what distinguishes them. This method helps us to put them in different classes. When the ideas are general, however, they cannot be subjected to senses. We cannot see a body in general, a tree in general. The ideas considered in this manner become intellectual, for even though to begin with these ideas were due to sensations, they are no more objects of the faculty that can feel, they are now the objects of the faculty of intelligence, i.e. the faculty that abstracts, that compares, that judges.

If the objects are present, we can touch them, see them, we can observe them from all aspects. If they are absent, we have their images before our eyes, our imagination constitutes their form, our memory



reminds us of what we had seen. With the help of memory and imagination we try to concentrate on an object that is absent. We are continuously confronted with sensible and intellectual ideas. At times they help us fix our attention on a given object, at others, they leave contradictory effects following the manner in which each faculty perceives that object. One can thus neither depend entirely on sensible ideas nor on intellectual ideas. The most difficult is to have control over our own imagination. In the domain of imagination, the objects become more and more obscure. We have to then depend upon all our faculties.

One has to penetrate deep into one's own self to reflect upon the objects being analysed. One must note the impressions that the faculty of senses has left on us, the way our spirit was influenced, the circumstances which are responsible for these ideas. In such cases, imagination is of great help. It is only with the help of images that we can mentally reconstruct the objects of our reflection and analysis.

We have here the most important definition of analysis given by Condillac. To analyse, says Condillac, is to decompose, compare and apprehend rapports. But analysis decomposes only to demonstrate as much as possible the origin and the generation of things. It must present partial ideas in a way one observes the reconstruction of all that one analyses. The one who decomposes haphazardly deals only with abstractions, the one who does not abstract all the qualities of an object, offers only incomplete analyses, the one who does not present the abstract ideas in the order that facilitates the knowledge of the generation of objects, deals with analyses which are not very instructive and in fact are very obscure. Analysis is thus the entire decomposition of an object and the distribution of the parts in the order in which the generation of the objects becomes easy. There is thus a striking parallel between the three way method of *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *intellectus* of Abélard and senses, imagination and intelligence of Condillac. Both of them begin

from the senses but do not depend entirely upon the corporeal faculties. The next step is memory and imagination, especially in the case of general ideas of body, rationality, humanity, where no corporeal resemblance is possible. But the domain of imagination has its limitations and the final and the most dependable faculty is intelligence. The intermediary state of images however is indispensable, it plays an extremely important role in the theory of signification in both Abélard and Condillac.

In Chapter VII of *L'Art de penser*, Condillac illustrates his theory of language with the help of an example of a young man of Chartre of twenty-three years, deaf and dumb since birth, who suddenly began to speak. To begin with he uttered three or four words only. A liquid came out of his left ear and he began to hear perfectly with both his ears. He did not speak much for a few months. It was followed by a very restricted speech, just a few phrases that he had heard around him. Surprised, theologians began to question him on the principles of God, soul, moral laws. Even though the young man was born of Catholic parents and he visited the Church with them, he could not answer such questions. Until then he had lived purely at the corporeal level. He had never reflected on such issues. He had never engaged himself in abstractions and comparisons. Condillac says that the spirit of a man deprived of communication with others is so little exercised and cultivated that he can think only of the external aspects of things. The greatest richness of the ideas of men is in their reciprocal commerce. Condillac states that for the first twenty-three years, the young man paid no attention to objects around him. Brought up by and being amongst men he could relate some ideas to immediate actions and signs. He could probably satisfy his immediate needs. But he did not know the names of those ideas where there was no special rapport with him. Even when he saw something, he did not subject that experience to his reflection. Whether he could exercise his faculty of reason even in this limited domain is an important question.

To reason is to apprehend rapports with which two, three or more judgements are related with each other. For example, when I withdraw my hand from the burning coal that is coming close to me, I judge that this coal burns, that it will not burn me if I stay away from it, and consequently, I should withdraw my hand. A logician does not require anything more to formulate a syllogism. I should avoid, he would say, all that burns. As this coal burns, it should be avoided. But the decomposition of these judgements and the syllogistic form do not make a reasoning. It is only a manner of speaking. However, the same development becomes absolutely necessary when the reasoning is highly complex. We consider separately its different parts, we develop them one after the other, we give specific signs to each idea, to each judgement, to each rapport. The young man of Chartre was used to look after his needs, to judge whether the things were useful or not, to conclude whether he should avoid them or not. He did not distinguish successively these operations, they all occurred in one instant. He lived purely at corporeal, sensuous level. Condillac asserts that the sensations are only sensations, they are transformed into ideas only when our reflection considers them as images of some things :

*les sensations ne sont que des sensations, et elles ne deviennent des idées, que lorsque la réflexion nous les fait considérer comme images de quelque chose. (p. 236).*

Compare Abélard in Logica<sup>18</sup>:

*Sicut autem sensus non est res sentitia, in quam dirigitur, sic nec intellectus forma est rei quam concipit, sed intellectus actio quaedam est animae, unde intelligens dicitur, forma vero in quam dirigitur res imaginaria quaedam est et ficta, quam sibi, quando vult et qualem vult, animus conficit...*



In Chapter VIII Condillac presents his critique of Realism without, like Abélard, falling in the Nominalist category of William Occam as earlier quoted from Sylvain Auroux. To abstract, says Condillac, is to draw, to separate one thing from another whose part it was, consequently, the abstract ideas are partial ideas separated from their whole. There are two views on these ideas. Some consider them innate (Descartes), others believe that they are the result of the spirit. The former are mistaken, the latter are not nearer the truth. The action of the senses is sufficient to produce some abstract ideas, the spirit helps to produce more. Senses and spirit coordinate to constitute abstract ideas. All our ideas are only different combinations of these two types. If we judge the sensible qualities, which our senses perceive in the subject immediately or with the help of instruments, we formulate ideas of mathematics and physics. If we judge by analogy the spiritual qualities which belong to the subject, we discover the rapports of resemblance and difference between the subject. An abstract noun becomes a general or a summarised idea when it is a denomination of several things which have common qualities. Colour, sound, odour are all both abstract and summarised ideas : abstract ideas, for they are partial ideas which we separate from the objects, summarised ideas, for each of them designates a certain number of sensations. It is from these points of view that we should consider abstract or summarised ideas. Otherwise, we could attribute to them more reality than they actually have. It must also be noted that it is less with rapport to the nature of things than with rapport to the manner in which we know them that we determine the genre and the species : *Mais il faut remarquer que c'est moins part rapport à la nature des choses, que par rapport à la manière dont nous les connaissons, que nous en déterminons les genres et les espèces...* Compare Abélard : *Quidam rerum modus habendi se*. All our ideas in the beginning, states Condillac, were particular ideas. They were certain sensations which we considered as modifications of our being, or as the qualities of subjects. These ideas

represented a true reality, for they were only due to a certain being modified in one way or another. We cannot perceive any thing within us that does not belong to us, to our being in one form or another. But our spirit cannot reflect on a large number of modifications, it considers one at a time. It separates it from its being, it takes away all its physical reality. However, we cannot reflect upon nothing. How can then it be the object of our reflection? It is because it continues to consider it as a being. As it is used to consider it within an object, with a given reality, it continues to perceive it with the same reality. There is a contradiction. On the one hand, it envisages modifications without any rapport to their being, and as such they are no more anything, on the other, as one cannot reflect on nothing, it continues to consider it as a thing and attributes to it a reality with which it perceived it in the first place. Whatever may be the contradiction, it is all the same necessary. Our spirit cannot reflect upon every thing at the same time. It must distinguish one quality from another and formulate abstract ideas, and even though these modifications lose all reality that they had, it must be presupposed, otherwise it can never be the object of our reflection.

It is this necessity that is the reason why many a philosopher did not see that the reality of the abstract ideas was the work of our imagination : *la réalité des idées abstraites fût l'ouvrage de l'imagination*. Compare Abélard : *res imaginaria quaedam est et ficta, quam sibi, quando vult et qualem vult, animus conficit*. The philosophers (realists) considered these ideas as something real. As they did not follow the progressive analysis of abstraction, they considered these ideas as real beings. At times, these ideas were attributed to different degrees of reality. The ideas of modification were considered less real than those of substance and those of substance less than those of the beings. These philosophers perceived some realities even under the words, body, animal, man, etc. They considered these words as the signs of some reality even though a

given substance may have undergone some alternations, they do not question whether they may still belong to the same species. This question would be superfluous if they placed under different collections of simple ideas the notions of substances and species. When they ask whether the ice or snow are water, a foetus, a man, whether God, the spirits, the bodies or even void are substances, it is obvious that the question is not whether these things correspond to the ideas gathered under the words, water, man, substance. One has to know whether these things include some essences, some realities that one supposes that these words, water, man, substance signify. With this prejudice, the philosophers imagine that one should define the substances by the difference that is the closest and proper to explain their nature. Abstractions are generally the phantoms that the philosophers have considered as things. What they have said with reference to space and duration is another example of this type of thinking. The pure space is only an abstraction. One can reflect upon such ideas with the help of certain suppositions. When one says, suppose a body that is no more and keep those objects which surround it at equidistance, instead of deducing existence of pure space, we can only infer it, and we can continue to consider the space within a given time and we no more consider the other partial ideas that we have of this body. This is all that a supposition can do. The fact that we can distinguish between different notions, it does not follow that there are, in nature, the beings which correspond to our partial ideas. It is an effect of imagination that even when the body is no more, we continue to posit a space that surrounds it. It does not mean that this space does not exist. It implies that the idea that we constitute of this space does not demonstrate its existence. The same is true of duration. It is only an abstraction. It is in following the succession of ideas of duration that we represent the duration of things which are outside us. This means that we know neither the nature of space nor of duration.



The names of substances have the same space in our spirit that the subjects have outside us. They are the lieu and the support of simple ideas as outside subjects are the qualities. Condillac continues his argument which gives the impression of almost literal paraphrasing of the similar argumentation presented by Abélard in his *Logica*. It is a mute point of contestation whether Condillac was aware of Abélardian thinking on the subject. By the eighteenth century, Abélard's choice of the middle path between the extremes of Realism and Nominalism had become an integral part of French intellectual culture. The same is true of Abélard himself. There are endless debates on how much of Plato and Aristotle was available to Abélard in the beginning of the twelfth century. The Middle Ages had inherited the entire Greek tradition through Augustine and other commentators. After all the heat generated by the support and opposition of Realism and Nominalism is a proof enough that no thinker could escape these philosophical axioms. We must understand the Abélardian heritage in the same manner. Otherwise there is no other explanation of such close parallelism between Abélard and Condillac, and as we will see later, with Merleau-Ponty.

Condillac continues. We can know all the simple ideas which enter our notions which we constitute without any model. But the essence being, according to the philosophers, what constitutes what it is, it is a consequence that we can in such cases have ideas of essences and give them names. For example, that of justice signifies the essence of justice, of wisdom, the essence of wisdom, etc. It is perhaps the reason that the Scholastics believed that with the names which express the essences of substances one can follow the analogy of language, and they coined words like corporeality, animality, humanity to designate the essences of body, animal, man. There are only two ways of making use of the words : to use them after having determined all the simple ideas which they would signify, or after supposing them to be the signs of the very reality of

things. The first is embarrassing, for the usage is not always clearly decided. Men see things differently, have different experience of them, and they do not always agree on the simple ideas which they must attribute to them. Even when there is an agreement, it is not easy to see the exact nature and extension of different qualities included there.

We would like to conclude this discussion on Condillac's theory of signification with a presentation of his doctrine on the necessity of signs described in Chapter VI of *L'Art de penser*. Condillac begins with an example from arithmetic where if after having given a name to a unit, we do not imagine successively all the ideas that we constitute with multiplying this first, we will not be able to make any progress in our knowledge. We can differentiate only if we have distinct numbers for them. If these numbers or signs are not there, we cannot follow their ideas. The numbers two or three are represented by two or three objects. When I move on to four, I am obliged to imagine two on the one side and two on the other, for six, I may distribute them in twos or threes. And, if I want to go any further, I will have to consider several units as one unit and put them together as one object. Condillac says that Locke talks about some Americans who did not have any idea of the number, thousand, because they had numbers only upto twenty. Condillac asserts that they could probably not count even upto twenty-one. For a system of calculus one needs only the primary numbers. Once the primary signs are given, there are rules to invent others. Those who do not have this method are obliged to have signs which do not have any analogy amongst them. The progress in the knowledge of numbers comes from the exactitude with which we add a unit to itself and give to each progression a name that distinguishes it from the one that precedes and the other that follows. One should not have any illusion in imagining that the ideas of numbers, separated from their signs, is something clear and determined. Condillac says that Malebranche thought that the numbers perceived by pure

intelligence are superior to those which are attached to senses. Saint Augustine (in *Confessions*), the Platonists and all the partisans of innate ideas (Cartesians) had the same prejudice. If I am asked what is a thousand, my only answer can be that this word fixes in my spirit a certain collection of units. I begin with adding one unit to another and come up with a sign for two. I add another and we have three. I continue until ten. And, from one tens to another, we arrive at a unit of a hundred. There are three successive steps : the idea of a unit, that of operation with which we add one unit to another, finally, the order in which this whole operation takes place. There are two methods of constituting simple ideas as one sign. The one following a model, the other without any model. I find a body. I see its length and breadth, it is divisible, solid, hard, yellow, fusible, heavy, it can be melted, etc. It is obvious that I cannot describe all the qualities distinctly and separately. I can think of only one quality at a time. However, with one sign, gold, I am able to represent all the simple ideas or the qualities under one word-sign. The significance of this word would depend upon my classification and abstractions of all the characteristics of this object. This is the problem when we have a model, a given object. The problem with abstract objects like morality, virtue, justice, humanity is far more complex. They are composit word-signs whose significance depends entirely on the specific perceptions of the simple ideas which compose them, which can be numerous in each case. We cannot however remember all these ideas. We communicate only by means of word-units, and it is on these signs that we reflect. Condillac says that it is the regular use of these signs which facilitates our reflection and helps us to multiply the signs. The signs and reflection interact with each other contributing to the reciprocal progress of language. We can augment the activity of our imagination, memory and reflection only if we concentrate on the object within which we correlate the largest numbers of signs and ideas. One can never exercise equally one's memory, imaginaton and reflection on every object, material or abstract.



This operation depends upon the attention one pays to an object with different rapports and different qualities. It all depends upon our interest in one or the other specific characteristics of the object. We can never thus make use of the signs with the same clarity, the same precision and in the same order. It is thus obvious that those who aspire to reach the universal beings are bound to be unsuccessful. To have ideas on which we can reflect we need to imagine signs which serve as liens for different collections of simple ideas, and our notions cannot be exact until we have constituted signs in a proper order that establishes exact correlations. Unfortunately, we learn words before we know their ideas, says Condillac. The reason comes only after memory and it does not always comprehend ideas which correspond to our signs. Moreover, there is a considerable interval between the time a child begins to cultivate his memory and learn words whose significance he is not aware of, and the time he becomes capable of analysing its notions to properly comprehend their significance. Generally, we have neither the time nor the competence to analyse each sign we make use of and we usually employ them with an approximate significance. Finally, just as Abélard emphasized the ambiguity of words used by different prophets in his *Sic et Non*<sup>19</sup>, Condillac explains that the obscurity and confusion are due to the fact that while using the same words we believe to have accorded to them the same ideas though normally some add a few partial ideas to these words and others take away. And, we end up having different combinations of ideas for the same signs, and, almost literally paraphrasing Abélard, Condillac asserts that often the same words in different mouths, and even in that of the same person, have different signification<sup>20</sup>:

*L'obscurité, et la confusion viennent de ce qu'en prononçant les mêmes mots, nous croyons nous acorder à exprimer les mêmes idées, quoique d'ordinaire les uns ajoutent à une complexe des idées partieles qu'un autre en retranche. De là il arrive que différentes*

*combinaisons n'ont qu'un même singe, et que les mêmes mots ont dans différentes bouches et souvent dans la même des acceptions bien différentes.*

4. The third landmark is Maurice Merleau-Ponty in modern times. His work is known primarily from the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. Merleau-Ponty is a philosopher of phenomenology with the relation between language and thought being one of his major concerns. With the Saussurian distinction of *langue* and *parole* as the point of departure, Merleau-Ponty juxtaposes *parole parlée* and *parole parlante*. There is the language already spoken, fixed, standardised, given, and the language that is being spoken, in praxis, which is ambiguous, which is in search of signification in the very act of speaking. Abélard had insisted that with words the speaker generates intellections or ideas for the comprehension of the hearer who is also a thinking being. Communication, for Abélard, takes place between two thinking beings. Hence, it is in the very act of communication that the significance is constituted. For Merleau-Ponty, the world is present like a horizon. One has only its representation. It enables one to orientate oneself, aiming at the manifestation of things, but at the same time, transcending them. The significations of culture are never absolutely transparent.<sup>21</sup> The signification is both present and absent at the same time. The significative intention is defined by the excess of what one wants to say on what has already been said. *Parole* is this eternally recommenced effort at transforming the silent and latent presence into explicit and manifest presence. The significance emerges within the signifying unit as much as in their secret relations. All expression is a provisional fixation : fixation, for we do understand something ; provisional, for the signified like the signifier is inscribed in the indefinite movement of differentiation and articulation that characterises the thinking thought, thought in praxis, *pensée pensante*, and the speaking speech, speech in praxis, *parole parlante*.

The emergence of significance is understood in the distinction between the spoken and the speech in praxis. There are two levels of signification in the communication process. Parole, for Merleau-Ponty is that paradoxical operation where we try to relate, with the help of the words whose significance is already at our disposal, an intention that by definition goes beyond it.<sup>22</sup> To speak is to introduce differences where there were none before. Parole realises or creates significations, it does not translate the significations already given. Parole, as distinct from langue, is that moment when the significative intention, which is as yet silent, is able to incorporate new significations in the culture of the being and the other by transforming the instruments of culture. Merleau-Ponty states that the author and the reader believe that as they speak the same language they are on the same terrain with given significations. As such the author installs himself in the world of the reader. And, just at that moment of faith, the author administers deviations in the significations of the signs and leads the reader to another horizon without his being conscious of it.<sup>23</sup> Merleau-Ponty discusses at length the signification of situation. In the context of the acquisition of language he says that to acquire a language, of a culture or of an author, is to be engaged in the whole and follow the movement of differentiation and articulation. However, this movement continues indefinitely. This is why we say that language is acquired as soon as one begins to speak, and at the same time, it is being acquired eternally. Langue and parole are related with the experience that has been and the experience that will be.

For Merleau-Ponty there is a coherent deformation of the signification of the spoken language. This emerging significance is created not only for the auditeur but it is, believes Merleau-Ponty, a decisive step for the speaking subject.<sup>24</sup> If there is an identity of parole and thought, it is only at this moment of communication. Before and after, they mutually surpass each other. Between the sound and the



significance, parole is what is supposed to be communicated. The relation between the speaking speech, *parole parlante*, and the thinking thought, *pensée pensante*, is obvious. One is immediately reminded of the Abélardian distinction between *vox* and *sermo*. The fundamental problematics of linguistic communication is exactly the same for Merleau-Ponty in the twentieth century Saussurian French tradition as it was for Abélard in the twelfth. It is situated squarely within the communicative act, between the beings actively engaged in speaking and understanding. The physical nature of the word and its signifying function, the relation between the word and the thing, and between the word and the thought are central preoccupations, and in spite of different metalanguages, different expressions charged with different intellectual ambience, there is an essential convergence and continuity from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. And, just like Abélard, Merleau-Ponty follows the middle path in the phenomenology of perception remaining equidistant from spiritualism and materialism<sup>25</sup> :

*Il n'ya pas une signification unique de l'histoire, ce que nous faisons a toujours plusieurs sens, et c'est en quoi une conception existentielle de l'histoire se distingue du matérialisme comme du spiritualisme.*

The problematics of signification is also its indeterminacy and ambiguity. In the comprehension of the other, says Merleau-Ponty, the problem is always indeterminate, for only the solution of the problem will retrospectively delineate the convergent contours ; only the central motif of philosophy, once understood, gives to the text of the philosopher, the value of adequate signs. It is thus necessary that the significance of the words be created by the words themselves, or to be more precise, their conceptual significance is constituted on the basis of the gestural signification, which is immanent to parole. Every language, metalanguage, of the speaker or the author, is taught by itself and creates its significance

in the spirit of the auditeur. The significance of a literary text is less in the common, given signification of the words than in the generation of significance, in its act of modification. There is, for the one who listens or reads, for the one who speaks or writes, a thought in the speech, *une pensée dans la parole*, that intellectualism does not expect.<sup>26</sup> Merleau-Ponty insists that we should recognise that thought is not a representation for the speaking subject, it does not consciously pose objects and relations. The orator does not think before speaking, not even while he is speaking. His parole is his thought. It is the same for the auditeur. We do not have a thought on the margins of the text, the words themselves occupy all our spirit, we are totally involved in the discourse, we are in a way, possessed by it. The end of the discourse or the text is the end of an interlinkage. It is at this moment that the thought and the discourse emerge. The discourse is understood as one thought. The significance is nowhere, at any given point. It is everywhere. The words are behind us like the objects behind our back or like the horizon of our town around our house.

Parole is not the sign of thought, says Merleau-Ponty, if we compare it with the phenomenon where the smoke indicates fire. Parole and thought will accept this relation if it is thematically given. In fact, they are enveloped with each other, the significance is in the parole and the parole is the external existence of thought. Merleau-Ponty does not accept the argument that parole is only a means of fixation or an envelop of thought. We easily remember words and phrases but not thoughts. Words cannot be the fortress of thought, and thought can find the expression only if the words themselves constitute a comprehensible text. Parole possesses a power of expression that belongs only to it. Words and parole must cease to be a simple manner of designating objects or thoughts to become the very presence of this thought in the sensible world, its emblem, its body. There should be a linguistic concept

or a verbal concept, an internal expression which is specifically verbal with the help of which the sound heard, pronounced or written becomes a fact of language. When an expression is successful, it does not leave simply an aide-mémoire for the reader or the writer, it enables the signification to exist as a thing in the every heart of the text, it enables it to live in its organism of words, it is installed in the reader or the writer as a new organ of sense, it opens a new field, a new dimension of our experience.

This power of expression is well known in art and music. The musical significance of a sonata is inseparable from the sound it carries. Before we have heard it, no analysis enables us to foresee it. Once the composition is terminated, for our analysis we can refer only to the moments of experience. During the composition, the sounds are not only the signs of the sonata, it is there, across them, it descends in them. In the same way, argues Merleau-Ponty, an actress becomes invisible and it is Phèdre (whose role the actress is playing) appears. The signification devours the signs. Phèdre completely takes possession of Berma. The aesthetic expression is installed in nature as a thing perceptible and accessible to all, or inversely, tears away the signs themselves, from the actress, from the colours and the canvas of the painter, from their empirical existence, and places them in another world. It is obvious here that the act of expression realises or effectuates signification, it does not translate it. There is nothing internal to thought. It does not exist outside the world, and outside the words.

What misleads us and makes us believe that a thought exists before our expression is the thought already constituted and already expressed that we can remember in silence. In fact, this pretended silence is the noise of the paroles, this internal life is internal language. The pure thought is reduced to a certain void of conscience. The new significative intention is recognised only when it is covered by the signification which



is already there, which is a resultant of an internal expression. These given significations interact with each other following an unknown law, and once for all, a new cultural being begins to exist. Thought and expression are thus constituted simultaneously when our cultural acquisition is mobilised in the service of this unknown law, as our body suddenly cedes to a new gesture in the acquisition of habits. Parole is a veritable gesture, it contains its signification as the gesture contains its own.<sup>27</sup>

Merleau-Ponty believes that the phonetic gesture realises, for the speaking subject and for those who listen to him, a certain structure of experience, exactly as a comportment of one's body invests, for him and for the others, the surrounding objects with a certain signification. The significance of the gesture is not within the gesture as a physical phenomenon. The significance of the word is not within the word as a sound. It is the human body that appropriates it in an indefinite series of discontinuous acts of significative nuclei which surpass and transcend its natural powers.

To see traces and parallels of Abélardian theory of signification in both Condillac and Merleau-Ponty, we may conclude this paper with some of the Abélardian propositions presented in Jean Jolivet's *Arts du langage et théologie chez Abélard*.<sup>28</sup> To begin with Abélard insists that the words first signify ideas, not the things. Furthermore, to say that a word signifies is to say that it manifests an intellection of the one who pronounces it, and it generates, for the one who listens, a similar intellection. To signify is to constitute an intellection. As communication takes place between two thinking beings, it is in the very act of communication that the ideas or intellections are generated. This aspect of Abélardian theory of signification is presented even more distinctly in his theory of dictum where he states that the significance of a proposition is understood in a relative independence of the words which

constitute it. In any case, even the formation of words and sentences is, for Abélard, a resultant of a certain mental activity. The construction of words, regulated by simple grammar, corresponds neither exactly to the logical structures nor to the nature of things, it refers to. Intellection serves as a negotiating term between the language and the world. Abélard distinguishes between the signification of things and the signification of intellections. The thing is one but it is apprehended across different intellections. We have here the phenomenology of perception of Merleau-Ponty and the distinction between senses and ideas of Condillac stated in most unambiguous terms. What is expressed by a proposition, for Abélard, is not a thing, it is only an intellection of the object, a sort of a half-thing, *quasi-res*. Words are not the objects of thought, they are only signs and their function is to lead the spirit of the auditeur towards the real objects, the things. The intellections are constituted in the spirit of the auditeur and they play a mediatory role between the spirit and the world.

Within a proposition the individual significance of the subject and the verb is blurred. They do not cease to exist, for the words do not disappear, their respective intellections can be referred to, but argues Abélard, they tend to slide into non-being, in the image of what the proposition expresses. It corresponds to the states of things, but only the things exist, the states of things do not. This is why Abélard distinguishes between the manner of signifying, *modi significandi*, and the manner of thinking, *modi intelligendi*, on the one hand, and the manner of thinking and the manner of being, *modi essendi*, on the other. And, to conclude we can say that this Abélardian distinction is also the most fundamental problematics of modern French semiotics.

It is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that Condillac was inspired by the English scholar, Locke, and Merleau-Ponty was influenced by the German philosopher, Husserl, both chose to follow the middle

path initiated by Abélard. The historians of ideas of the empiricist tradition would obviously question such an ideological linkage. However, how can we justify the striking parallelism between Abélardian dialectical incisions and those of Condillac on the one hand, and Abélardian theory of *imaginatio* and the phenomenology of transcendence of Merleau-Ponty, on the other. As I have shown at numerous occasions in this paper, there are contexts where Condillac as well as Merleau-Ponty seem to be almost literally paraphrasing Abélard's arguments. It is a historical fact that as states Carré, quoted earlier, with Abélard we have a definite epistemological cut in the Neo-Platonic Augustinian tradition, and almost all commentators agree that Abélard was critical of both Realism and Nominalism, and had forcefully argued for a middle path of Conceptualism or Non-Realism. It is also a fact of the history of ideas that since Abélard, the entire French intellectual tradition has avoided the extremes of Anglo-Saxon empiricism and Germanic idealism. During the eight centuries that followed the tumultuous upheavals of the twelfth century, Abélard and Abélardian thought became an integral part of French intellectual tradition in every sense of the term. In Lévi-Straussian terms, it acquired the status of a myth, and like any mythical thought, it entered the unconscious of French Culture. Following Saussure we can say that like the structures of language the structures of culture are also evolved by men without their conscious knowledge. To prove or to disprove an intellectual linkage, one should look for the traces left in the authors who follow. This is how an Anglo-Saxon scholar, David Luscombe, has tried to establish a continuity in Abélardian thought in his book *The School of Peter Abelard*.<sup>29</sup> In this paper, I have followed the same method to demonstrate a continuity that goes far beyond the earlier enterprise.

It is also interesting to note that the Abélardian myth has become the archetype in every aspect of French intellectual life. Régine Pernoud writes that when Jean-Paul Sartre proposed to marry Simone de Beauvoir,



Simone argued exactly in the same terms as had been used by Héloïse.<sup>30</sup> And, another biographer of Abélard, Suzanne Bernard, drew her inspiration from the archetypal figure of Abélard in as recent times as the Gulf War.<sup>31</sup> The historian Jacques Le Goff has called him the “first professor of modernity”, and the classicist Victor Cousin has considered him the true precursor of the University of Paris, as the lieu of all intellectual disputes and the fights for the freedom of spirit and body. In other words, Pierre Abélard along with Héloïse, represent the archetypal mythical characters in the intellectual tradition of France who once and for all laid down the broad parameters of intellectual behaviour and thought in the Hexagon.

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Pierre Abélard  
(1079-1142)

TREATISE ON INTELLECTIONS

- (1) In order to describe mental representations or intellections, we have decided, for a more explicit presentation of the latter, to first of all, distinguish them from other passions or affectations of the soul, from those which apparently seem closest to their nature. It is followed by their distinction from each other in accordance with their proper differences, to the extent we think it to be necessary for the theory of language. In fact, there are five affectations of the soul which need to be distinguished carefully : sensation, imagination, estimation, science, and reason<sup>1</sup>.
- (2) Intellection is related to sensation, at times, by its origin, at others, by its name. By its origin certainly, for any one of the five senses can, on the basis of any reality, impose a notion of that reality. Consequently, on seeing, on hearing, on feeling, on tasting or on touching something, at the very moment we perceive it through senses, we also comprehend it. And the human weakness is reduced

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1. This rendering into English is based on Pierre Abélard's text, *Tractatus de Intellectibus*, edited by P. Morin, Vrin, 1994. Since Intellection is the fundamental concept of this treatise, I have used verbal formations such as to intellect, intellected, intellecting. HSG.



to rise create anything by means of intellection, which does not resemble corporeal realities that we have experienced through our senses.

- (3) With the word also : we misuse the word, *significance* for *intellection*, when we say, the significance of the words instead of the intellections of the words. Aristotle and a number of other authors frequently employ the term, *sight*, for *intellection*, maybe, because such a term seems to be closer to intellection than others. In fact, the thing that we understand, the spirit places it before it in a way that we are used to distinguish a thing placed before us, or near us, or at a distance. Therefore, as sensation and intellection are related to each other as much by origin as by name, I considered it necessary to underline their differences at the very moment they are produced in the souls.

### SENSATION AND INTELLECTION

- (4) They are different because the sensorial perception of a corporeal reality requires a corporeal instrument, i.e. a movement of the soul in a manner that it is necessary that it be directed towards, or, it acts on a corporeal reality, and that it functions with the help of some corporeal instrument, either with eyes, or with ears, or with some other part of the animated body, without which there can be no perception.
- (5) But intellection, i.e., the very reflection of the spirit, needs neither the exercise of a corporeal instrument, which it may make use of to reflect upon, nor the distinctive qualities of an existing thing over which it may reflect, for the spirit comprehends, as much, by intellection, a thing, existing or non-existing, corporeal or non-corporeal, even a souvenir of a past event, or a prevision of future, or even, at times, the fantastic beings, as a centaur, a chimera, a

bouc-cerf, mermaids, and a number of others. Thus there is a very clear difference between sensation and intellection.

- (6) Moreover, sensation does not have the power of deliberation, i.e., to distinguish a thing by its nature or its property. It is also common to animals whether they are rational or not. In fact, there cannot be any intellection unless it distinguishes a thing in accordance with a nature or a property, even if this notion be only chimeric. As such, when the spirit comprehends a creature as an animal, constituted, in part, by a man, and in part, by a horse, it is necessary, consequently, to draw its attention to the nature of the animal, to its body or to its substance. And, since it considers certain parts of man and horse as interrelated, it cannot ignore either the characteristics of the body of the horse or those of the body of the man.
- (7) It follows then that there can absolutely be no intellection where the reason is not the basis of any deliberation, i.e. to understand a thing either for its nature or its property. And we believe that the reason is the effort or the facility of the distinct spirit with which it is sufficient to recognise clearly and to distinguish with veracity the nature of things.

### REASON AND RATIONALITY

- (8) Rationality is not the same thing as reason : rationality belongs to all the spirits, angelic or human, for which they are called, rational, but reason belongs only to some of them, as we have stated earlier, to only those spirits which are distinct. This is why I think that there are as many differences between rationality and reason as there are between the power of running and the power of running easily, for which Aristotle calls them, *runners*, those who have flexible muscles.

- (9) Thus the spirit that can discern on the basis of a nature possesses rationality. But only he has the reason who can exercise it with facility, not hindered by any weakness of age or any other handicap of body which would render him mad or stupid.

### **SPIRIT AND REASON**

- (10) Spirit seems to be the same thing as reason. It is thus obvious, in accordance with what has been stated earlier, that intellection is as much different from sensation as from reason, and it is derived necessarily from reason, inasmuch as the permanent effect of reason.
- (11) It follows then that wherever reason does not reside, necessarily is absent also there, intellection, which as we said earlier, deliberates on the basis of reason or on the basis of some nature, be that of man or of horse, or some property, be that the colour or the form of an object, even if they are represented only mentally, either together, jointly, or separate from each other.

### **IMAGINATION AND INTELLECTION**

- (12) It is obvious that intellection is different from imagination, for imagination, like sensation, does not deliberate on the basis of reason; but for the things that we have perceived by the senses, imagination is nothing but a certain souvenir of the sensation, as for example, in the absence of the thing that we perceive, the spirit, in a certain manner, retains for itself, a souvenir, the state of the sensation, as it was earlier, even now not deliberating anything by means of imagination on the basis of reason, not any more than it did earlier, by means of sensation. I have added, by means of imagination, because when imagination and intellection inhabit together, at the same time, the same soul, as do frequently sensation



and intellection, we cannot deny that a certain deliberation is established, by means of intellection ; but not by imagination.

- (13) This is why imagination is a confused perception of the soul, a perception deprived of the sensation of the thing that we imagine ; we call it, confused, for it does not deliberate on the basis of reason, not any more than sensation. Often, in fact, we perceive through senses what we do not at all through the act of intellection. Even though sensation may be oriented towards the things which are produced outside, the spirit, all the same, with the help of intellection, is directed towards other things. For example, when the study or the meditation of an object occupies our spirit, the effort of our intelligence is directed towards this object, not towards the one that we see or perceive in a certain manner to be present. In other words, we never stop our efforts to comprehend the earth or the sky that we observe continuously.
- (14) When the same object leads, at the same time, to a sensation and an intellection, the opposites operate on the same object. The act of perceiving and that of intellection are quite different : the latter is based naturally on deliberation, the former, not at all . Furthermore, the different senses, when they operate on the same object at the same time, for example, in a specific case, when I touch wood and also see it, I do not go beyond its properties even though I perceive them in different manners. We retain each of the properties without the other. This is how, intellection, without sensation, which operates at the same time, remains absolutely intact in the deliberation of the same object which was there before.
- (15) What we consider without sensation, we describe it in the form of an image, we are able to do that, for sensation is also a confused perception of the soul, because it also does not distinguish anything on the basis of reason, it was necessary to consider it apart from

sensation. In fact, where sensation operates, imagination cannot operate at the same time. In the absence of sensation, imagination plays the role of sensation, not by perceiving through the senses, but by perceiving the absent thing as does sensation when it distinguishes without judgement, as we have stated earlier.

- (16) Consequently, there can be imagination only of a thing that is absent, whose presence is not met by sensation, there can be sensation only of a thing that is present. As to the intellection, it can exercise on a thing that is present as well as on a thing that is absent, and it may be noted that wherever we find sensation, we can also have imagination. For even the beasts, in the absence of the things they have perceived, retain their image, as is attested by Boethius, as if they are still attached to the things they had perceived due to the souvenir they retain from their imagination, as they did earlier due to sensation. They retain this image, that their sensation has left, for a short or a long time, according to their capacity. We may also note that some believe that all imaginations are, as we stated earlier, the souvenirs of sensations. Aristotle, however, says, as reported by Boethius in his commentary on *Perihermeneias* that without image we cannot have intellections.
- (17) It is due to this that even though most of our intellections are of incorporeal things, we also have intellections of corporeal things which are not based on sensations. As such, following Aristotle, imagination, that we have described earlier, can be defined as being a confused perception of the soul without sensation, this perception may be derived from sensation or not.
- (18) The statement of Aristotle that we cannot have intellections without images should be understood as that when we, by means of our intellection, deliberate on a certain nature or a property of a thing, we may be concerned only with that nature, which is the habit of

sensation, where all human knowledge comes from, we end up reflecting, by imagination, on things which were not the centre of our attention.

- (19) For example, while we are concentrating on man as far as the nature of his humanity is concerned, as a mortal, rational, animal, after eliminating naturally all that does not concern humanity, several things obviously, which we have deliberately ignored, are imposed on our spirit due to our imagination : colour, length, a certain disposition of the different parts of the body, and a number of other accidental forms which we have retained from earlier sensations. This happens to the extent, which is admirable, that while I concentrate on something incorporeal, I end up, due to the constraints of sensation, to imagine it as corporeal, or, while I examine a thing that is not coloured, by the habit of my sensation, I imagine it as coloured.
- (20) First of all we have sensations which linger on ; they are followed by the human spirit which rises, first, to the level of imagination, then to that of intellection. What we said earlier, we reaffirm it. Horace has also said ; *the new camphor keeps for a long time the perfume of its content*. As we stated above, the habit of sensation is such that we can never comprehend a thing without imagining it with some corps or some corporeal property. It is perhaps for this reason that it is said, following Boethius, that the intelligence that belongs to very few persons and to God, transcends both sensation and imagination, in a manner that it is not due to either, nothing is presented to the spirit except what is understood or attended to.
- (21) Consequently, intelligence is an intellection of the kind that no confused perception of the soul accompanies it, either by imagination or by sensation. As to God, it is clear that neither sensation nor imagination can be a hindrance, for both of them lead



to a confused perception of the soul, but He can, with one single intellection, comprehend everything, where we have to do it with a lot of attention.

- (22) As to what Boethius has said, that intelligence belongs to a very small number of persons, following Aristotle, we do not agree with him, unless by chance, during meditation, a divine revelation animates a person. Aristotle calls animation of the spirit, knowledge rather than intellection, this can only be attributed to the divine and not to the human spirit, when the soul, animated by God, acquires this intellection, when the man within us, is in a way, dead, and it is God who is alive.
- (23) There are some who argue against Aristotle that when sensation and intellection are produced at the same time, we have intellection without imagination. We do not agree with this. In fact, when I examine the wood I see, I imagine all the same its hardness or some other characteristic that the sight does not perceive, and thus our intellections do not exist without our imagination, as Aristotle has said.

### ESTIMATION AND INTELLECTION

- (24) Now that we have seen how intellections differ from sensations, imagination and reason, we have to note their differences from estimation and science. It seems that estimation is the same thing as intellection, for sometime we use the word, *intellecting* for *estimating*, and the word, *opinion*, which is the same thing as estimation, is sometimes used for *intellection*. But they are different, for to estimate is to believe, and estimation is the same thing as believing or faith.
- (25) To intellect is to represent mentally, by means of reason, whether we believe in the thing intellected or not. Following this, if I hear a

statement, a man is made of wood, I do conceive the intellection of this proposition even if I do not believe this concept, i.e. even if I do not believe that my concept accords with reality. This is why whoever estimates something necessarily intellects what it estimates, but the reverse is not true.

- (26) And there is estimation only of what the proposition has to say, i.e. of some liaison or division of things. As such, it is an established fact that one cannot have it without the intellection of a proposition.

### SCIENCE WITH RAPPORT TO ESTIMATION OR INTELLECTION

- (27) Science is neither intellection nor estimation, it is certitude of the spirit which persists even in the absence of estimation or intellection. Otherwise, the dormers would lose their science. Aristotle has, however, placed sciences and virtues, because of their long duration, along with habits rather than with dispositions.
- (28) This is all that we want to say about the differences between intellections and the five affectations of the soul which precede them.

### OF DIFFERENT INTELLECTIONS

- (29) Now, following our plan, we will carefully distinguish between different types of intellections to clarify distinct propositions.
- (30) One should thus distinguish intellections which are composed or multiple, which are valid or invalid, which are true or false, the intellections which compose and the ones which are made of things already composed, the intellections which divide and the ones which are made of things divided, the intellections which divide and the ones which abstract.

### SIMPLE AND COMPOSED INTELLECTIONS

- (31) We call certain intellections, simple, just as we call certain actions or the aspects of verb, simple, which are naturally not composed of successive parts ; in the contrary case, we call them, composed. The nature of the discourse that provokes intellections is the same as that of the intellections themselves. Within a discourse, some are simple, as words, one by one, others are composed, as the phrases, which are necessarily constituted of different words, having within themselves, their proper significance. Similarly, the intellections derived from simple discourses are simple and the intellections derived from composed discourses are composed.
- (32) In fact, when someone says, the man walks, he does so with the help of several significative words, and his listener also ends up collecting appropriate intellections from a succession of words. First of all, one comprehends man, the name that was established to signify, man, followed by the understanding of the action of walking, and then relating the two.
- (33) But it should be noted that a simple intellection is not the one that is entirely exempted from parts but which does not have them in succession. In fact, it happens often that of one word we understand many things at the same time ; for example, when we hear, two or three, or even, many things, the people, a troop, a heap, a house, or no matter what other word that contains several things, either in quantity or in the form of the matter at the same time. For the name, man, determines, at the same time, the matter of an animal, the faculty of reasoning, and the nature of being mortal, but one understands the whole simultaneously, not in succession.
- (34) There are perhaps also several simultaneous actions in one single intellection of a simple discourse due to the fact that the spirit conceives many things even though it obtains only one action from



each of the things that it deliberates upon. But all the same, one should not call it a simple intellection, if it is not expressed by successive parts. Consequently, the same thing can be conceived as a simple intellection or as a composed one. When I look at the three stones before me, at times, I see them in one glance, at others, in succession, one after another, in several glances.

- (35) Thus when we operate with sensation, or by intellection, in a way that it is presented mentally to the spirit, simultaneously, by a simple intellection, or by succession, it presents different things with different intellections. And this is, I believe to be, the difference between the intellections of a word and those of a sentence, signifying the same things ; for the word which is not constituted of any significant parts is understood as a whole while the sentence is understood in succession.
- (36) Even though following the conception of things, the significance of the word, animal, and of its definition, a sensible animated body, may be the same, the mode of intellecting, however, as we said earlier, is different, for by this word, we understand three things at the same time : by definition, we understand the last successively, inasmuch as we hear the words themselves in succession before we attend to the nature of the body, when we hear the word, body, followed by the property of being animated, and after that, its being sensible.
- (37) Consequently, the intellection of the word and of its definition is, in a way, the same, and in another way, different. The same, for according to the result of the things intellected, because we understand the same things according to one or the other formula.
- (38) But different, for the whole is understood simultaneously; successively, by adding the forms to the matter already intellected. And because, in one or the other intellection, one conceives the

nature of an animal, inasmuch according to its matter as much according to the forms which are the bases of all animal condition, the intellection of the word can be called the intellection of the things assembled or composed ; all the same, not the intellection that assembles or that composes ; and inversely, the intellection of the sentence.

- (39) In fact, the one who hears the word, animal, attends to three things at the same time – a body, the quality of being animated, and the sensibility – as being together in the substance of the animal ; and consequently, the intellection that treats the things as being already assembled is an intellection of the things assembled.
- (40) But this intellection brings together in succession the things already understood and the others which are understood soon after. For example, when, by means of an intellection, we add to a matter, examined earlier, the qualities of being animated and sensibility as the forms, i.e. when we reorganise this matter which we had earlier understood as simple.

#### INTELLECTIONS OF THINGS DIVIDED AND THE INTELLECTIONS WHICH DIVIDE

- (41) As the intellection of the things assembled is other than the intellection that assembles, the former is in fact the intellection of a word, and the latter, that of a sentence. Similarly, the intellection of the things divided is different from that of the intellection that divides. In fact, as animal, produces an intellection of the things assembled, the same is the case with, non-animal, which is an indefinite noun and signifies, a thing that is not an animal, produces an intellection of the things divided.
- (42) As the definition of animal, produces an intellection that assembles, similarly the description of non-animal, which is a thing that is not

an animal, produces an intellection that divides. In fact, in this sentence, a thing that is not an animal, I attend first simply to a thing, followed by the enunciation of the noun that is a thing, and after that, to what is not an animal, I separate this characteristic nature of the animal, in a way that I conceive of a thing inasmuch as it is not an animal.

- (43) Consequently, the intellections of the things assembled or divided are the intellections of words only. The intellections which assemble or which divide are the intellections of sentences only. The former are simple, the latter are composed.
- (44) There are a number of those who consider that the simple intellections have no parts ; either by succession or by time. They assert that the one who intellects several things at the same time attends to all these things with one and unique action.
- (45) But I do not want to refute this argument now that I see the reason for and against this view. What I have said until now about the simple and composed intellections, the assembled and the assembling, or the ones which divide and the others which are divided, should be sufficient. Now we should turn our reflection towards the intellections which are singular or multiple.

### SINGULAR AND MULTIPLE INTELECTIONS

- (46) We call, singular, all the intellections which are simple, or, if they are composed, all those which consist of only one liaison, only one division or only one disjunction. But we consider those intellections, multiple, which are opposed to them, i.e. which do not have any one of these characteristics.
- (47) The singular are the liaison, the division or the disjunction of an intellection when, with their help, the spirit constitutes them with only one impulsion of intelligence, and is placed there with only



one effort with which – for what was earlier understood in assembling or separating things, or separating them from another thing – it would complete in a way without interruption the task undertaken.

- (48) But the spirit obtains only one liaison of this kind when it attends to the things by succession – in such a way that by relating one thing with another, it constitutes only one entity – and moreover, every time that it relates things with each other with the force of one single affirmation, either by the predicative act, or by the liaison of a condition or of time, or in any other manner, as we have already stated, it is achieved in a continuous manner with only one impulsion of the intelligence.
- (49) Let us make it clear with the help of some examples ; when I say, rational animal, if I pronounce these words in a continuous manner, the auditor conceives of an animal and rationality in a way that it constitutes only one thing from the words, animal and rationality, i.e. a rational animal. Similarly, when I say, non-rational animal, I describe animal and non-rational in a way that I relate them to one substance, with the understanding that the same thing is as much animal as non-rational. Consequently, when one says, rational, there is produced a certain liaison and a certain division ; the liaison of non-rationality with animal, and a division, i.e., separating it from rationality. And it does not make any difference for the mode of conception or for its unity whether in reality it is conceived as such or not ; but it makes a difference for the reality of the concept. For, the intellections, rational stone and white chimera, are singular just like rational animal and white man. The sentences of this type produce singular propositions.
- (50) The intellection of the transitive liaison also does not reject the unity of the essence when we say, the house of Socrates, or, like

Socrates, or, accusing Socrates, or, Socrates. In fact, even in taking advantage of Socrates, the subordination of the oblique case is not to the same person as the preceding – giving the impression that the subordination may be to one or the other word – all the same, the following word, due to its suffix, determines, in the reality of the preceding word, a certain property of assemblage, in such a way, that when the property accords with this reality, we conceive only one coherent thing. In fact, when we say, the house of Socrates, the genitive itself – independent of the proper noun of Socrates – determines a possession with rapport to the reality of the preceding word by presenting it as possessed by Socrates, and to say, the house of Socrates, is the same thing as to say, the Socratic house. Similarly, all the other oblique cases related transitively to certain vocal sounds determine certain properties with rapport to the reality of the words which precede, following, in a way, their proper reality.

- (51) And I would add that beginning with the reality of the preceding words and the properties determined by the oblique cases, one understands it as a certain *coherent* thing. It often happens that one finds several liaisons or several divisions or several disjunctions in only one intellection even though the unity of the intellection is not for that matter suppressed, for, in all, there is only one liaison in the entire intellection.
- (52) For example, if I say, a man (is) walking who runs, or, a man walks who runs, there are two liaisons ; the first is the fact of running with man, for we say, a man who runs, and for a man running, when we add, walking, we have a good syntactic formation, a man who runs (is) walking, a man who runs walks, and thus only one union of the entire sentence is produced in the ensemble ; from, walking, to, man, i.e. the man who runs. But if say, a man who runs is the man who walks, whether in the predicated phrase or in the subject phrase,

only one liaison is produced. But because we understand that again only one liaison of the entire proposition is produced in all, i.e. of man who walks, to, the man who runs, it renders only one intellection.

(53) Consequently, when several liaisons meet in one intellection alone in a manner that all go to form only one, and because of that, these liaisons are treated in a way that only one is constituted of all of them, it is necessary that this intellection that the spirit is forced to obtain in a continuous manner of one impulsion alone of intelligence be only one.

(54) But we call, multiple intellection, a large number of intellections detached from each other, as for example, if I say, man wood, or, rational mortal, or, animal, and after remaining silent for a while if I add, rational, I show with these words the separate intellections which do not meet to allow a conception of only one thing, each word presenting its own reality, without ever relating the reality of one with the reality of another so that the intellect may realise one single thing. In this way, the spirit comes back to itself from one *concept* to another as if it recommences in detail the movement of its *intelligence* ; and for this reason, it does not go from one to another in a continuous manner, and as such, *the unity of intelligence* is suppressed and the continuity is broken.

(55) What we have said until now about the unity and the multiplicity of intellections is sufficient for the moment.

### VALID AND INVALID INTELLECTIONS

(56) Now following our plan we will distinguish between the intellections which are valid and those which are not, or between those which are false and those which are true. We call intellections, valid, by means of which we attend to things, as they are, whether these intellections are simple or composed.



- (57) The intellections are called, invalid, whether they are simple or composed, they are generally called, opinions, rather than intellections. Aristotle says : the opinion that we have of it does not exist because it exists but because it does not exist, and Boethius in its commentary on *Perihermenias* says that the one who examines the false takes undue advantage of intelligence.
- (58) Aristotle, however, calls intellections, *conceptions*, whether they are false or true when he states in the same *Perihermenias* : at times there is in our soul an intellection which is neither true nor false, sometimes it is necessary that one of these should belong to it... for the verity or the falsehood is in rapport with the composition or the division. Furthermore, in the same work, Aristotle calls the intellections, valid, which are the representations of things, i.e. the representations which conceive the state of thing as it is, for example, when I try to understand man, or, man as capable of laughing, or, as not capable of neighing.
- (59) The singular intellections are valid because they concord with the state of things. As opposed to them, the intellections are invalid if I exercise my intelligence on the chimera which does not exist, or, that the chimera is a certain thing while it is nothing at all, because in fact this intellection of the chimera is without any subject whose reality according to an intellection of this type, could be deliberately valid in a way that would allow us to attend to this thing as a chimera with veracity, this intellection is absolutely invalid. It can also be that the intellection of the word, man, be invalid if it so happens that there is no existing man.
- (60) We call the intellections, true or false, which are composed or which compose, as the intellections of affirmation, or the ones which divide – as the intellections of negation, following those passages of Aristotle which we have cited earlier : as in the soul ... with rapport to the composition ...

- (61) It should be noted that when we say that a thing is deliberated upon with verity or falsehood following a simple intellection for example, if I attend to a thing as a man or a chimera, one should not interpret it that we do so by means of a simple intellection ; as a simple intellection conceives that a certain thing is a certain thing, i.e. of a type that it is sufficient to examine what does not exist at all, if it is not the object of an intellection that *composes*, it should be expressed by an *affirmation*, and not by just one single word.
- (62) Consequently, it is one thing to deliberate upon some thing following some intellection, and it is another to deliberate upon some thing by means of an intellection, i.e. the intellection itself be sufficient to attend to any liaison or any division of things so that it may itself be called, *deliberation*. As such, the intellection following which we deliberate upon some thing is a part of the deliberating intellection, in whose part is based the force of deliberation, as are the intellections of predicates, for example, when we state that a man is an animal and that a pearl is a stone, or, it is white.
- (63) In fact, the term, *subject*, exists only to receive a thing that we are going to deliberate upon ; but the *predicate* is presented to designate the *state* according to which we want to deliberate upon that thing, i.e. we attend to it following a property of that *state* with which we want to relate it. We also follow the *order of intelligence*, not only that of *syntax*; we call, *subject*, a term with which, in intellection, we subordinate a thing to deliberate upon it, in liaison or in *separation*. And in fact, this union or this separation, this *liaison* or this *disjunction* is achieved by means of the *predicate*, and in that liaison or in that separation, we talk about the *object thing* we want to show.
- (64) It follows that when we say that Socrates runs or that Socrates does not run, if some one asks, about whom we are talking, we can reply,

of Socrates, and if he asks, what is it that we are talking about him, we reply that he runs or that he does not run, which naturally comes to either the liaison or the separation of the predicate. Following this, Aristotle also employs *being said* for *being predicated*, to prove that the predicate is called, of the subject, not the subject, of the predicate, and that the predicate is what is said, and the subject, of what it is said. In fact, is said, or is signified predicate of a thing, is by means of which we show some thing as added to the same thing. He also says that the predicate is signified when he says in the second book of *Perihermeneias* : *which signifies some thing of some thing*, i.e. which predicates its essence, and in the same book, he calls, *appositions*, the liaisons or the separation of predicates. As the force of enunciation consists in what is said, in what way it is complete or accomplished, the force of the deliberating intelligence is established in the intellection of the term, what is said, i.e. what is predicated.

- (65) Consequently, every intellection following which a thing can be deliberated upon with verity, whether it is simple, as, man, or composed, as, white man, is valid, even if it can be signified by a particular vocal sound that cannot say anything with truth, as the partitive nouns : for example, each, all, one and the other. As such, the words, each, or, all taken separately have the same significance in the intellection as if we say the multitude of all things, and one and another, signify as much as these two, or, those two. Consequently, when we state that the multitude of things is the multitude of things, the deliberation follows the intellection of the words, each, or, all. And when we state that these two are these two, the deliberation follows the intellection of the relative noun, that is the one and the other. For even though these nouns which are partitive in syntactic construction with these vocal sounds which



are not partitive, but rather collective, bring about the same intellections, they do not have the same significance in an enunciation, for these predicated nouns of some things unite all things which they have, in separation, i.e. individually. This is why they are called, partitive ; the collectives relate conjointly, i.e. all things simultaneously, and not one by one in isolation.

- (66) Similarly, the subjects keep the same significance that they have in the predicative act. Because of the nouns which are partitive, the things are subordinated, one by one, to the predicate. But the collectives are all subordinated at the same time even though there is this difference between the predicative act of the things divided by the partitive nouns and their subject that united by their subject position in predicate position, they transform the enunciation into falsehood : for example, if I say, one and the other is one and the other, i.e. each thing separately is each thing separately.
- (67) But they do not refuse to be subjected to the truth, for example, when we say, one and the other is a man, or, each thing is some thing; it can be that the same vocal sounds depend upon our intelligence if we say that man and horse , or we say, man or horse. This brings nothing to intelligence but it does so to the syntax. In my spirit, I conceive equally, here and there, these two things : a man and a horse. But in a syntactic construction, these vocal sounds united with others produce a significance which is quite different. Consequently, it is not necessary that the vocal sounds should have exactly the same significance to be the same in a syntactic construction. We will treat this in detail in the section on syntactic constructions.
- (68) As to the intellection that divides or the one that disjoins or the one that abstracts, they are all different from each other. The one that divides is the intellection of a negation, it separates some thing

from another thing : for example, if I understand that a man is not a horse, or, the healthy is not sick, or, the one who is standing is not sitting. The one that disjoins is the intellection of affirmation, it does not create a separation between one thing and another. Of several things that it conceives in the spirit, it constitutes only one intellection as when I understand that some thing is a man or a horse, or, he is healthy or sick, or, he is standing or sitting. In the same manner, all the intellections of hypothetical disjoints are called the intellections which disjoin. This is created by the very significance of the disjunctive liaisons.

- (69) I think that this question should also be examined carefully. Should an intellection that attends to a thing in a way other than it is be considered false and deceiving? And should we consider every intellection, valid, if it conceives a thing as it is?
- (70) In principle, we believe that it is so – this being the case – we run into incoherence. In fact, every intellection derived by abstraction, conceives, in a certain manner, a thing other than the way it is ; and if, in another manner, it attends to it, the way it is, and if we obtain with a lot of difficulty an intellection of a thing that is not submitted to sensation, that does not conceive it in another thing in a way other than it subsists ; such intellections are called, *abstraction*, which either represent a form, mentally, without consideration to the matter under review, or meditate on some nature or the other, indifferently, without distinguishing the individuals which concretise it.
- (71) When I attend to the colour of a body or the knowledge of a soul in its proper being, the colour or the knowledge or the quality or some other being it is composed of, with the help of my reason I abstract, in a certain manner, the forms from the given substances, representing them only mentally, in their proper nature without

attending to the entire subjects. When I consider, without distinction, the human nature, which belongs to a singular man, in a manner that I do not attend to the personal distinction of any man, i.e. that I reflect on man simply, as he is a man, i.e. a rational, mortal animal, not that he is this man or the other, I abstract the universal from the indivisible subjects.

- (72) Consequently, the *abstraction* of higher things is realised from the lower things as the abstraction of universals from the indivisible subjects by means of the predicative act, or, the abstraction of forms of the matter from their elements.
- (73) On the other hand, one calls it, *subtraction*, if one separates, with one's intelligence, the subtracted subjects from the things placed above them, and considers them in isolation. For example, when one presents to oneself, mentally, the nature of a subjected essence without any form whatsoever.
- (74) One or the other intellection, the one that abstracts or the other that subtracts, considers the thing in a way other than it really is, as when with one or the other intellection, I intellect separately, the things which are, in fact, united, which do not exist separately, at times, considering only the matter, at others, only the form. As opposed to this operation, none can intellect all the natures or all the properties at the same time ; it can be done only one by one. Consequently, when we intellect any thing from the point of view of only some of the properties when the thing itself is not composed of only those few properties, we intellect it in a way other than it really is.
- (75) For example, this body is a body, a man, warm, white, and subjected to several other natures or properties. However, I intellect it as if it is only a body, not that it is a man, or it is warm, or white. As such, our intellect perceives, in things which are indivisible, only a part



of the natures or properties which inhabit the individual things, and not all of them. On the other hand, when one conceives purely and simply a corporeal nature, that one considers it only as corporeal, a body, or when one chooses some other nature as universal, intellecting it indifferently, without any personal distinction, one intellects it certainly in a way other than it subsists. In fact, as it exists as such, purely nowhere, it is never purely conceived. Wherever it may be, it possesses innumerable natures or properties which are not the object of one's intellection. Similarly, there is no nature that exists *indifferently*. Every thing, whatever and wherever it may be, is personally distinct and numerically one.

- (76) The corporeal substance in this body, is it other than this body or the human nature in this man, in Socrates, is it other than himself? No, absolutely not, it is the same, *essentially*.
- (77) Who does not intellect things other than the way they are, which are absent or insensible or even incorporeal, when one cannot intellect through senses by intellecting them as they are? Who does not realise after having seen a thnig which was earlier absent that his former intellection was at variance with several points on which he had intellected? Who does not conceive incorporeal things as corporeal, when, for example, one conceives God or soul, when it is obvious that they do not have any such body? Who does not conceive the spirits as circumscribed at a place, with limbs and colours, or in several ways which belong only to the human bodies? In fact, as we often recall, all human knowledge is derived from the senses. The very experience of senses forces us to intellect the state of insensible things in the form of sensible things. Consequently, if every time the spirit intellects a thing other than the way it subsists, the intellection is considered invalid, which human intellection, for the reason presented above, cannot be called invalid?

- (78) Let us follow now the other direction of our plan. Can every intellection that intellects a thing as it is, can be called, valid? Even though it is received well by all, it is subject to several criticisms.
- (79) The one who intellects that this man is a donkey which is absolutely false, does he not state that as this man is an animal, and that a certain animal is a donkey, both these statements are valid? It is inevitable, following the Aristotelian thesis of the second book of *Perihermeneias* that one who intellects that good is bad, also intellects that good is not bad. As such, most probably, the one who intellects that this man is a donkey, i.e. an animal of that species, must accept that intellecting the being of animal which is there in a donkey, one intellects the substance of animal, as it is expressed by the significance of the very word, donkey, within which the generic term, animal, is necessarily considered by our intelligence. And, in a contrary case, it is not necessary that the intelligence of the other contrary be conceived. Consequently, the one who intellects that this man is a donkey is convinced to have stated the truth. Moreover, one has to concede as true, the false intellection, that conceives a thing as it is. And, it may not be absurd that the truth and the falsehood, the contrary forms of intellection, inhabit, at the same time, the same intellection, or, be supported at the same time, by the same soul, which is indivisible?
- (80) Let us now resolve the above stated question and refute the argument which seems to disturb the truth.
- (81) What was questioned earlier whether every intellection that intellects a thing in a way other than it is, is really false, can be understood in two ways. There are in fact two significances of the statement : I intellect a thing in a way other than it is. The first significance is, if I mean to say that there is a certain way of intellecting a thing, and an other, the way it subsists, i.e. it is, in one

way, in our intelligence, and in an other, in its being. For example, if I intellect it as divided even though it cannot exist in its divided state, i.e. deprived of a characteristic without which it cannot subsist, or, if I intellect it purely, or in any way other than it subsists – this is the first significance of the statement that I intellect a thing other than the way it is or as it is found. There is also another significance, when one says that I intellect this thing as it is, i.e. I intellect it in a state other than it is, or being in any form other than in which it is found. In the first sense, the adverb, other than, is related to this verb, I intellect, but in the second sense, it is associated with the participle or the infinitive of the following verb, which is indicated as understood by the verb itself, as if one says : I intellect the thing being in an other way, or, being other than it is, or, being found in an other way. Thus consequently, the question posed earlier can be understood, when one is asked whether every intellection intellectioning a thing other than the way it is found, is false? Following different significances the responses will be different.

- (82) If it is asked, whether every intellection that intellects a thing in a manner other than the way the thing subsists is false, one should not accept it. *There are innumerable modes of intelligence of a thing which are not the modes of its existence.* But if it is asked whether every intellection that intellects a thing in a state other than the one it is found, is false, one should accept it. This should be answered in the same manner when it is asked whether when every one says that a thing is found in a state other than it really is, makes a false statement. In fact, when speaking rapidly about the one who runs slowly, one says that he runs, his act is different from the other, for, speaking rapidly he pronounces the words at a speed faster than the act of running, that is slow.



- (83) Let us now pass on to the other question whether one should call every intellection, true, if it intellects every thing as it is found.
- (84) In this context, to all the earlier objections, one should add, *only*. If we say that every intellection that intellects any thing in the only way it is found, should be considered false, every one will accept if I intellect that Socrates is an animal, or, that he is not a donkey, or, that I understand that only a certain animal is a donkey. But if I intellect that Socrates is a non-rational animal, I do not intellect him only in the manner, he is, for, from the fact that I associate non-rational with him, I go beyond and exceed the manner in which Socrates is.
- (85) Consequently, whosoever intellects a thing only in the way it is, in that the intellection is valid. But, for that, it is perhaps not necessary to simply concede that whosoever intellects a thing in a way it is, has a valid intellection, unless we add, in a way he intellects it.
- (86) While I intellect that Socrates is a non-rational animal, and, with it I intellect that he is an animal, which is true, I have a valid intellection, which is a part of the false complex intellection, but not in the sense that I intellect that the whole is a non-rational animal.
- (87) And, in this context, if some one objects that for the same reason one must concede that the one who intellects that Socrates is a donkey, i.e. an animal of the non-rational species, has, there, an intellection that is true or false, for that reason he intellects that he is an animal, one must not listen to him. In fact, because the word, donkey, for it is a simple discourse, gives rise to a simple intellection and not to an intellection made up of parts, we cannot, in the predicative act, distinguish the intellections of distinct enunciations, to be able to state, true or false. In fact, we signify and unite, at the same time, in the word, donkey, the whole of the substance and the whole of the nature of donkey, and not by parts.

- (88) But it also happens that if one objects, with regard to what has been said earlier, that whosoever intellects that Socrates is a donkey, intellects that some animal is a donkey, and whosoever intellects that a given animal is a donkey, intellects the truth, and whosoever intellects that Socrates is a donkey, intellects the truth. We answer that if the middle term is taken in the same sense, the assemblage is absolutely solid. But if there is a different acceptance of the middle term, then either of the propositions could be proved.
- (89) The middle term, however, is to state that some animal is a donkey, which can be interpreted in two ways. In fact, if we say about some animal that it is a donkey, the first major proposition, is true, the second, minor proposition, is false. In another manner, if we say that some animal is a donkey, as if one says, he has an affirmative intellection of the proposition, some animal is a donkey, the major is false, the minor, true.
- (90) We one say, and it would not be against reason, that the person who intellects that Socrates is a non-rational animal, does not mean by it that he is an animal, unless he seems to include a part in this whole intellection. In fact, in this way, we say, to intellect, instead of, to propose. And, this whole proposition, Socrates is a non-rational animal, does not propose that Socrates is an animal, but its parts, just as the syllogism, if Socrates is a pearl, Socrates is a stone, does not propose that Socrates is a pearl or that Socrates is a stone. Otherwise this syllogism would propose the falsehood, and the proposition, the truth. And as such, whosoever would say this would state falsehood and whosoever would say that would state the truth. Thus neither the one who intellects that Socrates is a non-rational animal intellects in this whole, the being-animal, for only in this, the effort of his spirit would not be complete, nor, on the other hand, because he would intellect that if Socrates is a pearl, Socrates

is a stone, he would not propose by this either that Socrates is a pearl or that Socrates is a stone. In fact, one would not say here that he intellects correctly for every conception of the spirit, but for this conception only within which the very effort of the spirit is realised and completed.

- (91) It is not necessary if I have a concept of some intellection. I may be asked to intellect this in a certain manner ; to intellect is simply to understand something with an intellection even though to intellect is not for that reason to understand it with the intellection of that thing, for obviously, as we have stated earlier, to intellect is not simply to have the intellection, but to have it in a manner that the effort of the spirit is realised and accomplished. It is so, for, *to signify is the same thing as to constitute an intellection, however, to signify some thing is not the same thing as to constitute its intellection*. For the others, when the simple discourses, the intellections and the things they signify, do not constitute for that reason, on the basis of these intellections, but on other intellections.
- (92) It happens often that one asks with regard to the significations and also with regard to the intellections of the vocal sounds of the universals, what things they signify, or what things one intellects there. When I hear the word, man, which is common to several beings equally, what is the thing that I intellect in this word. Our answer is that we intellect man in this very word. The question remains, in which way, it is true, if one does not intellect this man or that, or some other, for every man, it should be this one or that one or some other.
- (93) It is said that when one perceives a man by the senses, it is necessary that one perceives this man or that man or some other man, for this reason that a man is either this or that or an other. The same is true of intellections which resemble sensations, they reason in a way



that if one intellects man, it is necessary that he intellects this or that or some other. Moreover, man signifies nothing other than a certain man. Consequently, whosoever intellects a man intellects a certain man, and as such, he intellects this or an other. This seems to be absolutely false.

- (94) To this one should respond that if we want to reason correctly, we should aim carefully at the signification of the signified propositions to conscientiously look for and to recognise the exact value of the whole. Consequently, when we say, we intellect man, the significance of this proposition is that some one, with his intellect, conceives a human nature, i.e. he aims at an animal of this species. If it is further said that a man is either this man or that, he conceives this man or an other, his syllogism is not correct. On the contrary, one should say that whosoever intellects a man intellects this man or that. In this the middle term would be correctly maintained, and with this, the union of the extremes would progress correctly. But the minor term would be false. Similarly, when it is said that a cape is wanted by me, i.e. I want a cape, it could be that a cape would be this one or that. However, it does not follow that I want this cape or that one. On the contrary, if it is said that I want a cape and whosoever wants a cape wants this one or that, the argument would progress correctly. But if some one asserts with it that for the same reason one should not concede the construction that if I perceive a man, I perceive this man or that, I assert that this construction is not solid. In spite of the nature of the sensation which is exercised only within the thing that exists, one cannot concede, I believe, that if one perceives a man, one would perceive this man or that. Moreover, an intellection can be realised even if the thing does not exist, for we remember, due to our memory, the things which are now no more, and we also conceive, with our prevoyance, the things which may appear later,

and at times, we have opinions and beliefs about things which do not exist at all like chimera, centaur, mermaids, bouc-cerf.

- (95) Consequently, if I intellect a man or if I have some thought where I conceive human nature, it is not necessary that I should aim at this man or the other, for there are several other men and innumerable thoughts exist within which the human nature is intellectured. For example, the simple conception of the word, man or white man or the man who is sitting or even a man with horns, even though he does not exist, or some other thought where one intellects human nature, either with a distinction of a given person, like Socrates or some other, or indistinctly, without any certitude of a person.
- (96) It is also asked when I hear, every man, do I intellect, every man or when it is said that one of the two men runs, do I intellect that one of any two men runs or when it is said that the chimera is white, do I intellect a white chimera or when I hear the word, unintelligible, do I intellect the unintelligible?
- (97) And who would not admit that if I intellect, every man, I intellect that one also unless if by chance some one declares that he intellects, every man, in the same manner that if he says that he has a concept of the phrase, every man, which is certainly true even if he does not differentiate this man from the other. As such, when we say that the proposition, every man runs, says that every man runs, we do not then pretend that he proposes that Socrates runs or Plato runs. Otherwise, it would be multiple, and not one as it has been stated by Aristotle. It seems to us however that one cannot say correctly that one intellects each man if he does not aim at Socrates and all other individuals which, I believe, no one is capable of doing.
- (98) When it is said that one of these runs, i.e. one of them runs, it does not seem that one should concede that I intellect that one of the two runs, but neither one nor the other runs, for I intellect that neither

this nor that runs. And, when it is said that some man runs, rather than, no one or some one is said to run, neither this one nor that one is said to run.

- (99) To this one can respond that the proposition, one of the two runs, has two meanings. The first evidently is the disjoined hypothesis : either this one runs or that one runs ; the other is of the category that has a subject of the disjoined things as if it is said : this one or that one runs. Similarly, when it is said, I intellect that one of the two runs, or, I intellect that some man runs, there are two significances for each of the propositions. The first is that I intellect that some one runs, the other is that one of the two runs. In other words, either I intellect that this one runs, or, I intellect that the other runs, or similarly, I may say with regard to some one that he runs. According to the first significance, one should concede what is asked for, and not according to the second. But when it is said that I intellect that none of the two runs, or, no man runs, there are several significances for each of the propositions, one is affirmative and the other two are negative. In fact, if we interpret it as I intellect that none of the two runs, the significance is affirmative. But if one interprets it as I intellect none who runs, or, I do not intellect that this one runs nor that one, there are two negative significances. The first is obviously that of negation that is derived from its affirmation that was conceded earlier. The same would be true with regard to the proposition, I say that no man runs.
- (100) But it is also asked that when it is said that the chimera that is white, do I intellect a chimera who is white. This cannot be conceded even if it be true that I will be able to have an intellection of this phrase, the chimera who is white. In fact, I intellect a chimera who is white would be the same if it is said that I have a concept with which I intellect a chimera and that it is white. But if it is said, I



intellect a white chimera that could be true if I have the intellection of this phrase, the chimera is white.

- (101) It seems that one has to concede that when I hear the word, unintelligible, I intellect the unintelligible, i.e. I have a concept of this species where I intellect something that is unintellegible. But if it is said, I intellect the unintelligible, i.e. I have the intellection of something which cannot be intellected, it is absolutely false. And, this is perhaps its proper significance. Also, when we say, at times, this, at times, that, is indivisible, if some one says that the indivisible is divided, the significance is not at all correct. Similarly, if I say, Socrates is not predicable of several, and similarly, Plato, and for that we say that not predicable of several or what is not predicated of several is predicated of several, it does not seem to confirm to the truth. But if we add that the universal, the indivisible is divided, or, this universal that is not predicable of several is predicated of several, this presentation shows the true meaning that we accept.
- (102) It can also be asked by some that when I intellect a chimera and this is its significance that I have a concept of this species, does it imply that I intellect a chimera. Of course, it is true that I have a concept of this species which implies an intellection. But, on the contrary, who would accept that I intellect a chimera and it is an intellection. Certainly, if the chimera is an intellection, it must also exist. And, as the word, chimera, names an animal of this species, it is obvious that a certain animal is an intellection.
- (103) To this I respond that when it is said that I intellect a chimera, or, a chimera is intellected, this expression is symbolic. But if I say that I intellect a chimera that exists, we go to a proper expression, for, by this phrase, the chimera that exists, we treat personally a thing that one constitutes and that one pretends to exist. When it is

said that the one (feminine) that exists, and the one (masculine) that exists, there is a personal rapport due to feminine reference, it is not that of intellection. And, it should be noted that it is necessary that because the significance of these two phrases, I intellect a chimera, and, I have an intellection of this species, is obvious, I would add that joined with one thing or the other, they retain entirely the intellection for this reason that often the significances are called discourses. Individually, in the context of a grammatical construction they have a significance without contradicting the other.

- (104) The above stated arguments with regard to the mental representations should be sufficient for the time being.

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